LITERARY CHALLENGES TO THE HEROIC MYTH OF THE VOORTREKKERS: H.P. LAMONT'S *WAR, WINE AND WOMEN* AND STUART CLOETE'S *TURNING WHEELS*

FREDERICK HALE

Dissertation presented for the
Degree of Doctor of Literature
at the
University of Stellenbosch

Promoter: Dr Edwin Hees

December 2001

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Date: 14 February 2001

English Abstract

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary study of various historical novels which dealt to a greater or lesser degree with the Great Trek and were written between the 1840s and the 1930s in Dutch, Afrikaans and English but with particular emphasis on H.P. Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* and Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels* (1937). The analysis of all these fictional reconstructions focuses on the portrayal of the Voortrekkers found in them. Much attention is also paid to the historical contexts in which the two principal works in question were written and the great controversies which they occasioned because both of their authors had had the temerity to challenge the long-established myth of the heroic Voortrekkers, one of the holiest of the iconic cows in the barns of their Afrikaner descendants.

Chapter I, "Introduction", is a statement of the purpose of the study, its place in the context of analyses of the history of Afrikaner nationalism, its structure and the sources on which it is based.

Chapter II, "The Unfolding of the Myth of the Heroic Voortrekkers", traces its evolution from the 1830s to the 1930s and explores how both English-speaking South Africans and Afrikaners, especially Gustav Preller, purposefully contributed to it. Also highlighted in this chapter is the significance of the Great Trek Centenary and the events leading up to it in the middle and late 1930s in intensifying Afrikaner nationalism.

Chapter III, "The Heroic Myth in Early Dutch and Afrikaans Novels about the Great Trek", considers especially how these works were used as vehicles for placing before Afrikaners the historic virtues of their ancestors both to provide models for emulation and to stimulate their ethnic pride.

Chapter IV, "Sympathetic English Reconstructions of the Great Trek", deals with two novels, Eugenie de Kalb's *Far Enough* and Francis Brett Young's *They Seek a Country*, both of which reproduced the heroic myth to some extent.

Chapter V, "Rendezvous with Disaster? The South Africa in Which Lamont Wrote *War, Wine and Women*" establishes the context of intensifying Afrikaner nationalism which this immigrant from the United Kingdom encountered in the late 1920s when he accepted a lectureship at the University of Pretoria and why this context was hostile to a novel which was critical of Afrikanerdom.

Chapter VI, "*War, Wine and Women*: Its General Context and Commentary on South Africa" explores how this work, conceived as a "war book" dealing with the 1914-1918 conflict in Europe, depicted both Englishmen and Afrikaners negatively.

Chapter VII, "Academic Freedom *vs.* Afrikaner Nationalism: The Consequential Strife over *War, Wine and Women*" deals with the hostile reception of Lamont's pseudonymously published novel, the physical assault on him and his dismissal from his lectureship at the University of Pretoria.

Chapter VIII, "The Rhetoric of Revenge in Lamont's *Halcyon Days in Africa*", explores how the author, after returning to England, used his pen as a weapon for striking back at his Afrikaans foes in South Africa.

Chapter IX, "Stuart Cloete's Portrayal of the Voortrekkers in *Turning Wheels*", focuses on the portrayal of various ethnic types in his gallery of characters.

Chapter X, "The Controversy over *TurningWheels*", handles the hostile and apparently orchestrated reaction to Cloete's book and how it was eventually banned.

Chapter XI, "Conclusion: *Quod Erat Demonstrandum*", summarises several thematic findings which a detailed examination of the novels in their historical context yields.

Afrikaanse Abstrak

Hierdie verhandeling is 'n interdissiplinêre studie van verskeie historiese romans waarin daar in 'n mindere of meerdere mate op die Groot Trek gefokus word en wat geskryf is tussen die 1840's en die 1930's in Nederlands, Afrikaans en Engels, maar met die klem op H. P. Lamont se *War, Wine and Women* en Stuart Cloete se *Turning Wheels* (1937) in die besonder. Die analise van al hierdie fiktiewe rekonstruksies fokus op die uitbeelding van die Voortrekkers daarin. Daar word ook in die besonder aandag gegee aan die historiese kontekste waarbinne hierdie twee hoofwerke geskryf is en die groot polemiek daarrondom, omdat beide outeurs die vermetelheid gehad het om die lank reeds gevestigde mite van die heldhaftige Voortrekkers, een van die heiligste ikoniese koeie in die skure van die Afrikanernageslagte, uit te daag.

Hoofstuk I, "Introduction", stel die doel van die studie, waar dit staan in die konteks van analises van die geskiedenis van Afrikanernasionalisme, die skruktuur en die bronne waarop dit gebaseer is. Hoofstuk II, "The Unfolding of the Myth of the Herioc Voortrekkers", volg die evolusie van Afrikanernasionalisme van die 1830's tot die 1930's en ondersoek op beide Engelssprekende Suid-Afrikaners en Afrikaners, veral Gustav Preller, doelgerig hiertoe bygedra het. In hierdie hoofstuk word daar ook beklemtoon hoe betekenisvol die honderdjarige herdenking van die Groot Trek en die gebeure wat daartoe aanleiding gegee het gedurende die middel- en laat 1930's, bygedra het tot die versterking van Afrikanernasionalisme.

Hoofstuk III, "The Heroic Myth in Early Dutch and Afrikaans Novels about the Great Trek", bespreek veral hoe hierdie werke gebruik is om aan Afrikaners die historiese deugsaamheid van hulle voorvaders voor te hou en wat as voorbeelde moet dien wat nagestreef moet word en om hulle etniese trots te stimuleer.

Hoofstuk IV, "Sympathetic English Reconstructions of the Great Trek", bespreek twee romans, *Far Enough* van Eugenie de Kalb en *They Seek a Country* van Francis Brett Young, wat altwee die heroïse mite in 'n sekere mate herproduseer.

Hoofstuk V, "Rendezvous with Disaster? The South Africa in Which Lamont Wrote *War, Wine and Women*" vestig die konteks van groeiende Afrikanernasionalisme wat hierdie immigrant van die Verenigde Koninkryk in die laat 1920's teëgekom het toe hy 'n lektoraat aan die Universiteit van Pretoria aanvaar het, en hoekom hierdie konteks vyandiggesind was teenoor 'n roman wat krities was teenoor die Afrikanerdom.

Hoofstuk VI, "*War, Wine and Women*: Its General Context and Commentary on South Africa" ondersoek hoe hierdie werk, beskou as 'n "oorlogsboek" wat handel oor die 1914-1918 konflik in Europa, beide die Engelse en die Afrikaners in 'n negatiewe lig gestel het.

Hoofstuk VII, "Academic Freedom *vs.* Afrikaner Nationalism: The Consequential Strife over *War, Wine and Women*" skenk aandag aan die vyandige ontvangs van Lamont se roman (gepubliseer onder 'n skuilnaam), die fisieke aanval op hom en sy ontslag as lektor van die Universiteit van Pretoria.

Hoofstuk VIII, "The Rhetoric of Revenge in Lamont's *Halcyon Days in Africa*", ondersoek hoe die outeur, na hy na Engeland teruggekeer het, sy pen as wapen gebruik het in 'n teenaanval op sy Afrikaanse vyande in Suid-Afrika.

Hoofstuk IX, "Stuart Cloete's Portrayal of the Voortrekkers in *Turning Wheels*", fokus op die uitbeelding van verskeie etniese tipes in sy gallery karakters.

Hoofstuk X, "The Controversy over *Turnng Wheels*", bespreek die vyandige en klaarblyklike georkestreerde reaksie op Cloete se boek, en hoe dit uiteindelik verban is.

Hoofstuk XI, "Conclusion: *Quod Erat Demonstrandum*", bied 'n opsomming van verskeie tematiese bevindinge aan, wat deur 'n gedetaileerde ondersoek van die romans opgelewer is.

Contents

Chapter I

Introduction

In recent years significant though not particularly extensive scholarship has been devoted to analysing the development and maintenance of the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers during the first few decades of the twentieth century and, intimately related to this, to the impact of this myth on the unfolding of Afrikaner nationalism. One can thus point to such insightful studies as Isabel Hofmeyr's analysis of Gustav Preller's popularising of the myth[1] and Edwin Hees's survey of the representation of the Voortrekkers in the cinema.[2] Others have written about such intimately related topics as the origins of the Voortrekker youth movement and the genesis of the idea to create a monument to the Voortrekkers. Their illuminating and provocative essays about the purposeful shaping of the history of the Great Trek and its participants have added noteworthy new dimensions to important and frequently cited analyses done earlier on various aspects of the subject by *inter alia* Floris A. van Jaarsveld[3] and André du Toit.[4] It has been established that the desire of many Afrikaners to propagate - for pecuniary, political, moral, or chauvinistic reasons - a heroic image of the Voortrekkers, not least as exponents of values which were regarded as necessary to re-assert in the twentieth century, has long left its stamp on the most readily available printed and cinematic images of these pioneers.

Considerably less scholarly analysis, however, has been done of certain literary challenges to the myth as it was evolving during the politically turbulent decade of the 1930s. Two of these neglected dissenting views in fictional works which span both English and South African literary history and which sparked enormous public controversy shortly after their publication are Henry Parkyn Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* (which he published under the *nom de plume* "Wilfred Saint-Mandé" in 1931), and Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels*, which appeared six years later. Both books were initially published in London and New York but were soon distributed in South Africa, where they engendered bitter controversies and became targets of Afrikaner nationalists. *Turning Wheels* did not appear in a South African version for decades, and *War, Wine and Women* never did. Indeed, both novels were banned in the Union of South Africa, where particularly in Afrikaans cultural circles resentment of them long remained strong. Yet more than mere Afrikaner resentment was at work to keep Lamont obscure and Cloete relatively neglected. Lamont returned to his native England in 1932, and the few novels he subsequently wrote, all of which were artistically and ideationally shallow, failed to gain more than the scantiest contemporary critical attention. Cloete continued to write in both England and South Africa until the 1960s, but most

of his fiction has generally been dismissed as moderately sensationalistic romanticism which is suitable as fleeting entertainment but offers little artistic depth. Indeed, his own assessment of his authorship has dovetailed neatly with this perception; Cloete autobiographically described himself as "a first-class second-class writer — neither highbrow nor lowbrow". Presumably few if any literary scholars needed Cloete's superfluous confession that he was not "a writer in the Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck class".[5]

Placing the scholarly neglect of these works into a larger framework, it can be added that one searches conventional bibliographies of literary history largely in vain for discussions of other fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek. In this regard one thinks particularly of such works from the 1930s as Eugénie de Kalb's *Far Enough*[6] and Francis Brett Young's *They Seek a Country*,[7] both of which were heralded in South Africa and overseas during that decade but subsequently disappeared from both public consciousness and critical scrutiny. In articles published in 1999 and 2000 I analysed the employment of the heroic myth in various nineteenth-century Dutch and twentieth-century Afrikaans novels about the Great Trek, but these explorations represent only the beginning of what could be done in terms of probing that motif.[8]

In this dissertation I therefore plough virtually virgin soil by examining in their historical context literary texts which, at least as far as scholarly enquiry is concerned, have lain nearly fallow since the 1930s. The overall structure of this study involves three interwoven principal parts. The first is the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers as it developed from the 1830s until the early years of the twentieth century and was propagated in *inter alia* ethnocentric historical studies, Afrikaans children's literature, and the celebration of the Great Trek centenary in 1938. The second encompasses the challenges to that myth which the chief literary works under consideration posed during the 1930s. The third deals with the public controversies which ensued when Afrikaners who had been nurtured on the heroic myth reacted with hostility when it was threatened by these English texts. It will be demonstrated that the strife resulting from the publication of *War, Wine and Women* and *Turning Wheels* had relatively little to do with the artistic quality of those novels. Instead, it stemmed largely from the fact that many Afrikaner nationalists perceived them as threats to their historically rooted ethnic dignity, while other South Africans, chiefly but not exclusively Anglophone, of more liberal political bent believed just as ardently that fundamental issues of academic and artistic freedom were at stake.

It cannot be overemphasised that when twentieth-century Afrikaners repeatedly stressed their identity with and praised their Voortrekker forebears to the rafters, they were *inter alia* lauding themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as part of an evolving rhetorical strategy of elevating

their self-esteem and pubic image in an ethnically competitive South Africa between the two world wars. Far from drawing a strict line of demarcation between past and present, these creators and sustainers of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers stressed historical continuity which came to its full fruition in the centenary festivities of 1938 and the events leading up to that celebration of the Voortrekker heritage. In their perception, the attributes, ethos, and values of the emigrating Boers of the 1830s and 1840s were also their own. Latter-day Voortrekkers perceived in the virtues of their ancestors at least part of the salvation of their own nation. Perhaps unwittingly paraphrasing the third-century Christian theologian Tertullian, the Dutch Reformed missionary J.J. Ross expressed a common sentiment in 1938 when he penned an almost hagiographic essay titled "Karaktertrekke van die Trekkers. Die Goeie uit die Verlede Waarop Ons 'n Toekoms Kan Bou": "Dit word gesê dat die bloed van die martelare die saad van die Kerk is--mag ons aanneem dat die lyding en die bloed van die Voortrekkers, vroue en kinders, die saad is van 'n groot, vrye, verenigde Boerevolk".[9] Some of the Anglophone writers considered in the present study appear to have grasped this vital point. They not only perceived common elements between the mentality of the Voortrekkers and that of Afrikanerdom in the 1930s but were also keenly aware that their Afrikaans neighbours were thinking in terms of an intimate ethno-historical affinity. Consequently, these writers' treatment of contemporary Afrikaners, especially in the poetry of Francis Carey Slater and the novels of Henry Parkyn Lamont, is entirely germane to our topic.

Hence, the overarching purpose of this dissertation fully justifies the inclusion of a detailed consideration of Lamont's *War, Wine and Women*, even though it is not primarily about the Great Trek or the Voortrekkers, but about the First World War. Its crucial relevance to the present study lies in the fact that it represented an early challenge to the heroic myth and that in an age of heightened Afrikaner nationalism many Afrikaners, regardless of whether they had actually read Lamont's book, *believed* that the deprecating remarks about the Voortrekkers and their descendants voiced therein were an essential part of *War, Wine and Women* and took umbrage at them. The consequences of this resentment were great and included a physical assault on Lamont, his dismissal from his lectureship at the University of Pretoria, and, indirectly, the termination of that institution's policy of bilingual tuition and its transformation into an Afrikaans *volksuniversiteit*. Furthermore, when an enormous Afrikaans outcry greeted the distribution in the Union of South Africa of Cloete's *Turning Wheels* in 1937, aggrieved Afrikaners repeatedly described this work as an echo of the sentiments which Lamont had expressed some six years earlier and called for equally hostile public action against its author. The two works and the controversies

which they engendered, pitting defenders of Afrikaner nationalism against advocates of academic and artistic freedom, unquestionably belong together in a literary historical treatment of this sort.

As indicated, much of the emphasis in this study is on ethnic characterisation. In this regard we shall pay special attention to portrayals of Voortrekker characters, both individually and collectively. This is particularly appropriate, because the controversies over *War, Wine and Women* and *Turning Wheels* focussed on what Lamont and Cloete had written about the Voortrekkers and their descendants. Generally ignored in this verbal warfare was how these two novelists described people with whom the emigrating Boers came into contact, such as British colonial officials, indigenous Africans, Coloureds, German South Africans, and Jews, as well as the Dutch Reformed Church. These crucial themes, however, are not overlooked here; indeed, they are highlighted, because of the centrality of these peoples in the literature under review as foils and in other capacities, because authorial treatment of them significantly illuminates ethnic attitudes, and because in literature the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers has rotated to a considerable degree on the axis of their relations with other peoples. Only secondarily, though still significantly, shall we turn our attention to how the authors in question went about this task of ethnic description artistically. The same emphasis characterises our treatment of other, less controversial, fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek, namely those by Eugenie de Kalb and Francis Brett Young in English and in certain works of Dutch and Afrikaans literature. Obviously, no strict line of demarcation separates content from form in the consideration of fiction, but in any case we shall devote more space to the depiction of characters than to such other important artistic elements as narrative technique.

Structure

The general structure of this interdisciplinary dissertation differs markedly from that which one typically finds in a study limited to either literary or historical analysis. Its contextual emphasis on *inter alia* the historic development of the heroic motif necessitates a less narrow focus than is characteristic of many investigations of literary texts, while the concern with several authors' characterisation of the Voortrekkers and various ethnic groups in Southern Africa in their novels has required a more detailed examination of literary creativity than otherwise would have been

the case. Seen in the light of its interdisciplinary nature, the threads of continuity in this study become apparent.

What to some casual readers might initially seem like partially disparate elements - such as the detailed consideration given to the varying depictions of the Cape emigrants of the Great Trek by their contemporaries, the debate over bilingualism at the University of Pretoria during the 1930s, postfigurative Abrahamic and Mosaic motifs in *Turning Wheels*, and the debate over segregation in which Lamont and Edgar Brookes participated - all relate to the unifying theme of Afrikaner ethnic defensiveness as part of the backdrop against which the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers unfolded.

The structure of this dissertation reflects its interdisciplinary character and incorporates a logical progression in terms of literary history within the context of the unfolding of inter-ethnic attitudes in the Union of South Africa and its antecedent British colonies and Boer republics. Chapter II is an analytical discussion of the historical development of the image of the Vootrekkers, chiefly in nonfictional works about the Great Trek published in South Africa. In Chapters III and IV I then explore the manifestations of the myth in Dutch, Afrikaans, and English fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek. Chapter V presents H.P. Lamont and the politically tense South African milieu in which he wrote *War, Wine and Women* while a lecturer in French at the University of Pretoria, and Chapter VI is an analysis of that novel, focussing on both its essential (and, in the controversy which broke out over it, almost completely overlooked) character as a "war book" and Lamont's derogatory depiction of the Voortrekkers and their descendants in the Transvaal. In Chapter VII describe the hostile reception of *War, Wine and Women* in Afrikaans circles and the attacks on its author. Chapter VIII, a thematic sequel to the preceding two, analyses Lamont's next novel, written after he was hounded out of his lectureship and compelled to return to England, an autobiographical and bitterly vicious reconstruction of *inter alia* the sordid assault on him and a defence of his controversial book which occasioned it; in this work he again described the descendants of the Voortrekkers in vilifying terms. Chapters IX and X deal with Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels* and the resulting dispute which led to the banning of its importation into South Africa after Afrikaner nationalists protested vehemently against his portrayal of the Voortrekkers which departed notably from the heroic image which had become firmly entrenched in Dutch and Afrikaans novels about the Great Trek and had also found qualified expression in those by De Kalb and Brett Young. The final chapter is a summary of the findings as well as a closing argument in which attention will be called to the wealth of evidence adduced in support of the interrelated themes mentioned above.

Given the relatively complex nature and broad chronological compass of the evolution of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers, the manifestation of this in fictional and nonfictional works, the political context of the 1930s, the fundamental misunderstanding of *War, Wine and Women*, and the controversies surrounding this work and *Turning Wheels*, this dissertation necessarily ranges over a wider range of territory than is the case in dissertations generally. Nevertheless, the threads of thematic continuity will be apparent. None of the chapters is isolated from the others; notwithstanding the relatively far-reaching scope of this study, they are interdependent members of a whole.

In places I touch on phenomena which are secondarily related to the principal concerns of this study which are nonetheless related to it. To cite but one example, it will be seen in Chapter X that the public controversy resulting from Afrikaans resentment of Cloete's depiction of the Voortrekkers and the insistence that it be banned inspired certain Indian and English-speaking South Africans to call for similar treatment in which their own ethnic groups were described in allegedly disrespectful or downright calumnious ways. By including consideration of these related matters the frontiers of knowledge are thus extended not only directly with regard to the works under primary consideration but also on lateral fronts on which they touched in the endlessly complex world of historical reality.

For decades literary scholars have debated the borders of the term "novel". In the present study it is used in its inclusive sense to denote book-length works of fiction. Thus defined, *Turning Wheels* and *War, Wine and Women* are obviously novels, although the former could also be designated a historical romance, while the latter, like many other so-called "war books" of its generation, might equally justifiably be called an amalgam of fiction and self-glorifying autobiography.

Conscious of the thorny problems inherent in defining a literary canon and of the doubts which literary scholars and others have raised internationally about the concept of a literary canon as such, I make neither claims nor recommendations of canonicity for any of the relatively neglected novels. Nor, for that matter, do I contend that either *Turning Wheels* or *War, Wine and Women* has great literary merit. As indicated in detail in the following analysis, both works received many positive reviews in South Africa and overseas, and in retrospect they have certain strengths with regard to such matters as character development and description of people, landscapes, and events. It is demonstrated in this dissertation that these novels and the disputes they sparked are worth notice in the literary and cultural history of South Africa because of the light they shed on the pivotal myth of the Voortrekkers.

Both Cloete's *Turning Wheels* and Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* were published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the former was republished in South Africa during the 1970s. In this study I have used the London edition of *Turning Wheels*, which Collins issued in 1937, and the London edition of *War, Wine and Women*, which appeared under the imprint of Cassell and Company in 1931 bearing the pseudonym "Wilfred Saint-Mandé" as its author. All page references are to these editions. The details of the other works cited are included in the Bibliography.

The usefulness of journalistic material as a principal source in historical and literary studies has been much debated in recent decades, not least because some sceptics have pointed out that the men and women who write newspapers often lack expertise on the topics which they are describing, but also because many editors have used their newspapers tendentiously as weapons in political, racial, religious, or cultural campaigns. That supposed weakness, however, has been a strength in the present study. Particularly with regard to the debates over the literary quality - and even the legality - of the novels by Lamont and Cloete during the 1930s, editors and their readers brought the issues involved before the public in sharply pointed debates which cast an enormous amount of light on the Afrikaans and Anglophone South African mentalities of that time. One need only contrast the attitudes expressed in, for instance, *Die Burger* and *The Rand Daily Mail* towards *Turning Wheels* and the debate over that provocative book to grasp the point. Largely for that reason, I have included many quotations gleaned from numerous newspapers of both languages to illuminate critical judgments of the novels in question, popular responses to them, and the debates over such matters as the wisdom and moral defensibility of banning fictional works.

To a much lesser extent, the research for this study has included unpublished archival material, especially with regard to the machinations at the University of Pretoria that led to the dismissal of Lamont as a lecturer there. Such documents as correspondence between imperious Professor A.E. du Toit, principal of that institution, and like-minded government bureaucrats on the one hand and Lamont himself on the other richly illustrate certain facets of the controversy. They do not, however, reveal much about Lamont's many colleagues who stood squarely by him when his university post as well as his personal security were threatened.

What of the biases which I personally bring to bear on this study? In fairness to readers, I should emphasise that while I am a Christian I have no affiliation with or particular emotional attachment to the Dutch Reformed Church, which has been both lauded and vilified in the fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek. By the same token, my international circle of friends encom-

passes several Afrikaners whom I hold in high regard. These South Africans vary greatly in terms of political persuasion, theologies, and, apparently, sense of affinity with the history of their ethnic group, particularly its troubled saga of relations with indigenous Africans and Anglophone South Africans. In general, my perception of Afrikanerdom involves the conclusion that countless nineteenth- and twentieth-century descendants of Dutch, German, and French settlers at the Cape of Good Hope were tragically and unnecessarily ethnocentric and racially condescending towards the indigenes of southern Africa and that to a great degree these Afrikaners did their own ethnic cause and individual interests immeasurable harm by subordinating their Reformed legacy to their struggles for economic gain and the preservation of social status. This is perhaps most readily seen in their participation in the international practice of slavery, their encroachment on other ethnic groups' homelands, and their retrospective attempts to justify these actions on highly dubious biblical grounds which the Dutch Reformed Church once propounded but eventually disavowed. My extensive training in ethics and resulting sensitivity to many moral issues inescapably affect my perception of both the fictional texts under consideration and the controversies over them. As one who has devoted most of his professional life to scholarly enquiry in Europe, North America, and South Africa, I am staunchly committed to the fundamental principle of academic freedom as it has been exercised and defended in liberal societies since the Enlightenment. Moreover, both as an admittedly inconsistent pacifist and as an historian, I am intensely sceptical about the use of violence as a means of relieving tensions or solving other problems in relations between individual human beings, countries, or ethnic groups. That these convictions have coloured my perception and description of the brutal assault on H.P. Lamont after his authorship of *War, Wine and Women* was discovered seems beyond dispute. Furthermore, I am generally opposed to censorship, at least on the grounds on which both that novel and *Turning Wheels* were banned, *i.e.* that they contained passages which cast aspersions on the legacy of the Voortrekkers and on the dignity of Afrikanerdom in general. Decades of reading historical fiction against the background of extensive international training as both an historian and literary scholar have imparted to me a commitment to certain desiderata in this sub-genre. Among those which have some bearing on my interpretation of the novels discussed in this dissertation is an insistence on a high degree of historical accuracy in fictional reconstructions of historical events. In other words, I do not recognise a *carte blanche* principle of artistic licence because I cannot conscientiously condone superficial or otherwise slipshod research which it often masks, and there is a great deal of evidence of the latter in most of the literary works under consideration. Many literary critics have long criticised the carelessness of authors of realistic fiction in presenting details in

their plots. This has become a particularly visible concern since the 1980s and given rise to a noteworthy body of warnings in the pertinent critical literature. Many authorities such as J.M. Bickham,[10] David Madden,[11] Peter Porosky,[12] George H. Scithers, and Darrell Schweitzer,[13] to name but a few, have called attention to the crucial distinction between authorial licence on the one hand and unintentional but nevertheless often significant mistakes on the other. The latter, they have reminded us, can detract from the cogency of fiction.

Novelists who are bold enough to place before their readers fictional reconstructions of the past take upon themselves tremendous responsibilities, not only aesthetically but also epistemologically, burdens which no number of facile appeals to "artistic licence" can dismiss. If, for example, a novelist declares in a purportedly realistic novel that Paul Kruger was the first president of the South African Republic, a literary critic may justifiably indicate that erroneous assertion as a matter which detracts from the quality of the work. I believe that those writers who fail to measure up to their responsibility on either the aesthetic or the epistemological score can quite justly be criticised. This issue is particularly relevant to the present study, because Afrikaners who reacted defensively to Lamont's and especially Cloete's depictions of the Voortrekkers repeatedly insisted that the novels in question were historically flawed, but they rarely adduced any evidence to prove their point. Instead, as we shall see, in an era of heightened Afrikaner nationalism such critics were generally content merely to point out that Lamont and Cloete had portrayed the Voortrekkers in deprecating terms, not least with regard to miscegenation, and let the readers of the Afrikaans press draw their own conclusions about the value of those novels. Had these detractors taken the time to develop their arguments on an empirical foundation, they could have demonstrated numerous weaknesses in the texts and thereby provided thoughtful historical criticism that may have stood the test of time rather than merely producing extensive journalistic evidence of their ethnic rage.

Notes

1. Isabel Hofmeyr, "Popularising History: The Case of Gustav Preller", in Stephen Clingman (ed.), *Regions and Repertoires: Topics in South African Politics and Culture* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1991), pp. 60-83.

2. Edwin Hees, "The Voortrekkers on Film: From Preller to Pornography", *Critical Arts*, X, no. 1 (1996), pp. 1-22.

3. See especially F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Die tydgenootlike Beoordeling van die Groot Trek 1836-1842* (Pretoria: Mededelings van die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, C36, 1962) and *Die Beeld van die Groot Trek in die Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing 1843-1899* (Pretoria: Mededelings van die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, C42, 1963).

4. André du Toit, "No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology", *The American Historical Review*, LXXXVIII, no. 4 (October 1983), pp. 920-953.

5. Stuart Cloete, *The Gambler* (London: Collins, 1973), p. 166.

6. Eugénie de Kalb, *Far Enough* (London: Heinemann, 1935, and New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1935).

7. Francis Brett Young, *They Seek a Country* (London: Heinemann, 1937).

8. Frederick Hale, "Voortrekker Values for Afrikaans Youth in Pieter van der Merwe Eramus's *Twee Voortrekkertjies*," *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans*, VI, no. 1 (June 1999), pp. 48-62; Frederick Hale, "The Heroic Motif in Two Afrikaans Children's Novels about the Great Trek," *Die Kultuurhistorikus/The Cultural Historian*, XIV, no. 1 (June 1999), pp. 32-57; and Frederick Hale, "The Fountainhead of Dutch Fictional Reconstructions of the Great Trek: J. Hendrik van Balen's *De Landverhuizers*", *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans*, VII, no. 1 (June 2000), pp. 56-73.

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Chapter II

The Unfolding of the Myth of the Heroic Voortrekkers

Written and cinematic reconstructions of the Great Trek vividly illustrate the conviction that historiography is interpretation and not a scientifically objective reflection of past events. For well over a century depictions of that migration and its Afrikaans participants, first called the Great Trek and the Voortrekkers, respectively, in the 1870s, have been refracted through the prisms of both Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism. Inevitably, ideological, ethnic, and religious tropes have shaped to a profound degree readers' and viewers' knowledge of the migratory events of the late 1830s and early 1840s. Long before novelists began to create fictional portrayals of the Great Trek, South Africans representing various ethnic and political traditions had either vilified or lauded the Voortrekkers and ascribed their migration to widely diverging motives varying from mischievous adventurism, racist exploitation of indigenous Africans, and political rebelliousness on the one hand to an idealistic search for political and economic freedom on the other. The responsibility of British colonial policies in prompting the migration has also received varied treatment. Yet the lines of demarcation separating one interpretation from another have not always been neatly ethnic, as one might too hastily suppose. Practically from the outset, both Afrikaners and British colonists in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope stood on both sides of the issues mentioned. That is, not all the ethnic fellows of the Voortrekkers lauded their motives, and by the same token the Voortrekkers enjoyed some support in Cape Anglophone quarters. Nevertheless, in Afrikaans circles a dominant interpretative position emerged by the early years of the twentieth century. According to it, the Voortrekkers were to be venerated as heroes who provided models to emulate in the Union of South Africa, not least by Afrikaans youth in a rapidly changing, urbanising society in which, it seemed to many of their elders, conventional moral standards were in peril. This was clearly the case by the 1930s, as plans to celebrate the centenary of the Great Trek were evolving and fictional reconstructions of it had begun to emerge.

In the present chapter we shall trace the development of this prevailing myth by examining several of the principal interpretations of the Voortrekkers which were presented in the press during the 1830s and as they evolved in both popular and professional historiography between the 1850s and the 1930s. The vast amount of this published material necessitates a selective approach. We shall therefore cover a fairly representative cross-section of contemporary journalistic accounts and opinions of the participants in the Great Trek and their reasons for leaving the

Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, later nineteenth-century treatments of it by both amateur and professional historians, and the further development of the myth during the years leading up to the very widely observed centenary in 1938. In addition to examining written texts of various kinds, we shall briefly consider cinematic representations of the Great Trek. It will be argued that in many cases historians and other writers apparently shaped their retrospective depictions of the Voortrekkers in the interest of contemporary causes. The use of Afrikaans children's literature as a vehicle for conveying the heroic image will be considered in the immediately following chapter.

Contemporary Journalistic Depictions of the Boer Emigration

The departure of thousands of residents of the Cape received considerable contemporary journalistic attention in that colony. The colonial press was still in its early stage, although several newspapers in either English, Dutch, or both of these languages sought to keep readers abreast of economic, political, religious, and other news in the region and, to a lesser extent, abroad. Their editors frequently expressed strong opinions of the emigration from the Cape, which in their editorials they interpreted not merely as a social phenomenon but explicitly in the context of colonial politics. Political and ethnic loyalties often coloured their perception of this departure, although it was not simply a matter of the Anglophone editors condemning it while their Dutch-medium counterparts defended the trekkers. Especially among those in the former camp, critical and defensive attitudes towards the British colonial administration also influenced their views of the causes underlying this migration.

It is impossible to gauge accurately the degree to which journalistic opinion either mirrored or shaped prevailing attitudes in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope during the first half of the nineteenth century.[1] In this survey, we can merely present certain pivotal perceptions and arguments which suggest that the men who sought to influence the readers of their newspapers in Grahamstown, Cape Town, and elsewhere in the colony differed significantly and indeed crossed verbal swords in their understanding of what subsequent generations would term the Great Trek. It is noteworthy, however, that some of their explanations of the genesis of this movement and their portrayals of its participants reverberated for more than a century in the accounts of amateur and professional historians and presaged what by the 1930s were central aspects of the retrospective stereotype of the Voortrekkers.

Robert Godlonton (1794-1884), a Londoner by birth who had emigrated to the Cape in 1820 and functioned as a civil servant for over a decade before assuming the editorship of *The Graham's Town Journal* in 1834, expressed considerable sympathy for the migration without categorically approving of it. As early as June 1836 this neophyte journalist decried the "absurd notion" that "the colonists in general covet the possession of the country now in the possession of the Kafirs". Godlonton allowed that the emigrating farmers included "a few shallow persons" whose motivation was the desire for land. Rather, he insisted that most were leaving "simply to escape from that intolerable state of insecurity, of odium, and of suffering, which they have endured so long and with such exemplary patience, and which is solely to be attributed to a vacillating and ruinous frontier policy, and to the most flagrant and mischievous misrepresentations of designing men".[2]

Godlonton elaborated on the causes of the emigration two months later. His catalogue of motivating factors is particularly significant, because it echoed in subsequent historiographical summaries of the Great Trek. In another editorial Godlonton defended what he now termed "the self-expatriation of the frontier farmers" and cited three underlying reasons for this "movement". First, he referred to the enactment of the 50th Ordinance, which had granted certain rights to the Khoi Khoi. In Godlonton's perception this statute had released large numbers of "vagrants" from agricultural service who had subsequently chosen to sustain themselves by living on the herds and flocks of "plundered farmers" while the colonial government did virtually nothing to redress the grievances of the affected settlers. Secondly, this editor cited the terms under which slaves had been manumitted in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. He found it entirely unreasonable that

> the amount awarded to the proprietors does not amount to more than one-third of the *appraised value*; and, as though this sacrifice was not enough, they are called to sustain the additional loss -- delay, vexation, and inconvenience of proceeding to London, either in person or by proxy, before they obtain that to which they are entitled; thus causing a further loss to them of from 17 to 20 per cent. on the amount of their respective claims.

Thirdly, Godlonton sympathised with agricultural settlers who had been harassed by "Kafir depredation" and again took to task the colonial government for failing to provide "adequate military protection". He suggested sympathetically that "we need not be surprised at any measure,

however rash, which the sufferers may adopt to extricate themselves from a situation which has become intolerable; and especially when there appears, judging from past experience, so little prospect of essential amelioration".[3] This triad of causes would reappear for well over a century in historical accounts of the Great Trek, although there is no evidence that Godlonton directly influenced subsequent writers. It seems more plausible that he and some contemporary observers shared common perceptions of the factors that prompted disgruntled and frustrated frontier farmers to abandon hope of a better future in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope and seek better lives to the north and north-east.

In any case, Godlonton's views were by no means matters of consensus amongst Anglophone editors in the Cape. His counterpart at *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, a newspaper published semi-weekly in Cape Town, was considerably less charitable in his depiction of the emigrants. John Fairbairn (1794-1864), a native of Scotland, had landed in the Cape in 1823 and briefly edited this newspaper jointly with the poet Thomas Pringle before becoming its sole editor. Widely regarded as an influential reformer who had a hand in many public issues in Cape Town until the 1850s, he was resented for rhetorically supporting the Xhosa in their disputes with frontier farmers in the Eastern Cape and opposing the expulsion of these indigenes from the colony during the 1830s and 1840s, although he eventually became disenchanted with the Xhosa cause. As early as May 1836 Fairbairn "with regret"alerted readers to the decision of "a considerable number of gentlemen" in the area to remove to Natal. He termed this "a serious loss to the Colony" and, while acknowledging that as farmers they had experienced unspecified "serious disadvantages", expressed his conviction that relocating would not improve their lot. Rather than acknowledging any responsibility of the colonial administration for the grievances of these prospective emigrants, Fairbairn voiced his disapproval of farmers who "start off to unknown tracts as if in love with adventure for its own sake".[4] This is one of the first recorded instances of a British colonist in the Cape portraying the Voortrekkers as adventurers.

Fairbairn continued to depict the Voortrekkers in generally deprecating terms. Some four months later, he directly addressed the cardinal issue of unrest between settlers and black Africans as an alleged cause of the migration. Reflecting his well-known position on the Xhosa, Fairbairn denied that the departure of Voortrekkers from Swellendam was a novel event which could be attributed to "Caffer depredations". Instead, this editor believed that "the unnatural extent of the Colony compared with its present population" was the underlying cause.[5] A year later, Fairbairn dismissed suggestions that the emancipation of the "Hottentots", the manumission of slaves, and "Caffer irruption" had prompted the emigration, arguing that the removal of frontier

farmers antedated all three of these historical phenomena in the Cape. Rather, he condescendingly attributed the emigration to instinctive causes on the part of the Boers, whom he regarded as an indolent lot who loved their cattle and independence more than life in close proximity to other Europeans, especially in towns. To Fairbairn the archetypical Boer regarded "with disdain the grand, but to him unintelligible results of combined industry, the beauty and excellence of which he cannot know because they are intellectually discerned" and, rather than remaining settled, "tosses up his head like the wild horse, utters a neigh of exultation, and plunges into the wilderness".[6] In a similar vein, Fairbairn subsequently suggested that Voortrekker leader Piet Retief and his followers be arrested, returned to the Cape, and tried for deserting the colony. This infuriated editor's judgment was vitriolic: "We admit that Pieter's brain is turned. His whole conduct and language prove it. But on such a stage the very madness of Vanity becomes more dangerous than cool reason, or even military talent".[7]

Fairbairn's haughty language and the condescension underlying it infuriated Godlonton. The Grahamstown editor found the "bitterest reproaches" his counterpart had heaped on the "Trek-farmers" highly objectionable and, apparently with regard to Fairbairn's position on the Xhosa issue, called him "one great cause of their self-expatriation". Rather than grousing about supposed "Treason and Rebellion", Godlonton suggested, unspecified "wise and conciliatory measures" should be taken to attract the trekkers back to the Cape. Rhetoric such as that which Fairbairn had employed, he concluded, merely caused "the simple-hearted and hospitable Dutch settler to swear eternal enmity to the British name".[8]

The Dutch-language press in the Cape was even less well developed during the 1830s than the English newspapers there, but it could hardly have remained neutral in the increasingly acrimonious public debate over the emigrating Boers. In August 1837 the editor of *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, which was published in Cape Town chiefly in Dutch but also included some English text, responded vehemently to one of Fairbairn's diatribes against the Voortrekkers. He found it absurd to attribute to an innate human desire to migrate the current, unprecedented, and virtually simultaneous departure of more than 7 000 people from the Eastern Cape, especially because those departing were leaving their family homes with very little compensation. The editor accused his counterpart at *The Commercial Advertiser* of seeking to mislead the public in England about actual conditions in the colony, which he argued were

> ten gevolge eens stelsels van soortgelyke listige verkeerde opgaven, dat het Britsche Gouvernement geweigert heeft de rampen te lenigen, of de verongelykingen te

> verhelpen, waardoor een groot ligchaam loyale, nyverige en verdiestelyke mannen tot de wanhopige daad van zelfsverhuizing zyn vervoerd geworden, ten einde ontheven te worden van de drukkende bezwaren, waartegen geduldige onderwerping, niet langer bestand is.[9]

De Zuid-Afrikaan continued to defend what its editor regarded as the legitimate grievances of the Voortrekkers without, however, seeking to present them in general as an exceptionally heroic lot. At times he allowed them to speak for themselves by printing excerpts from letters they wrote from various places in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere. Such first-hand testimonies corroborated editorial assertions concerning the causes of the Great Trek.[10]

Henry Cloete Lays the Historiographical Foundation

Retrospective analyses of the Great Trek soon began to appear in print, chiefly in English. Symptomatic of the primitive state of the historical profession in Southern Africa during most of the nineteenth century, the first noteworthy historiographical treatment of the Great Trek was written by a government bureaucrat who did not have formal training in this craft. This early interpretation merits detailed consideration because many subsequent historians of the Great Trek relied on it. Its author, a great-grandfather of Stuart Cloete, Henry Cloete (1792-1870), was an internationally educated jurist and colonial official whose lineage could be traced in part to a German who accompanied Jan van Riebeeck to the Cape in 1652. He initiated his reflections on the Trek as an amateur historian while serving the British in Natal during the 1850s. What appears to have made a greater impact on his interpretation of the events that precipitated the emigration than his lack of formal training in historiography, however, were his professional status and his familial connections which spanned both Boer and British camps at the most intimate level.

A grandson of the Hendrik Cloete who acquired the subsequently renowned Groot Constantia estate in 1778, this future colonial official was born in Cape Town in 1790 and enjoyed the advantages of European preparation for his career. After a decade of childhood at the Cape, young Cloete was sent to schools in The Netherlands for five years and subsequently studied law in Utrecht and Leiden, taking his doctorate at the latter city's university in 1811. His continued legal studies at Lincoln's Inn in London were cut short when his father demanded that he return

to Cape Town in 1813. Three years later he married there Helen Graham, the daughter of a Scotsman. Cloete then practised as an advocate for approximately a quarter-century and sired no fewer than fourteen children, ten of whom survived infancy. In 1843 Governor George Napier dispatched him to Pietermaritzburg to effect a settlement with the *Volksraad* of Natalia which led to the surrender of that young republic to the British Crown. Cloete returned to the new British colony two years later as the recorder of its district court, a position he filled for nine controversial years before being recalled to Cape Town as a puisne judge of the supreme court of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. While the Cloete family was in Pietermaritzburg, no fewer than four of his daughters married British officers, thereby following obliquely in their father's footsteps by establishing marital bridges between Boer and Briton. Within the broader context of interethnic relations in Natal, the Cloete family thus had a profound interest in promoting harmony between these rival factions.

Against this background, Cloete's professed purpose in delivering a series of lectures in 1852 at the new Natal Society, of which he was then serving as president, becomes readily comprehensible. It bothered this middle-aged official that "a feeling of ill-will" had arisen between the Boers and British settlers in Natal and that the latter knew virtually nothing about the history of their Afrikaans neighbours who deeply resented their intrusions. He hoped that "more friendly intercourse between them" would result from this endeavour in public education. The pioneering Natalian journalist James Archbell published the first three lectures in Pietermaritzburg shortly after Cloete had delivered them; eventually they and two additional lectures appeared as a book issued in Cape Town in 1856.[11]

Particularly significant for the purposes of the present study is Cloete's interpretation of the causes of the Great Trek or, as he expressed it, "the voluntary expatriation of the Dutch farmers of the colony". He endeavoured to present these factors dispassionately after lamenting that "party-spirit" had led to "the most distorted, one-sided, and false views" on the matter becoming prevalent. Cloete maintained the hope that "after the lapse of years, when time has somewhat soothed down the passions, and calm reason has resumed its sway, that it becomes possible to obtain and impart a perfectly dispassionate insight into such events" as those he set out to describe.[12]

Cloete sought to lay the foundation for achieving this goal through a systematic analysis of the causative factors of the emigration. In creating this, he portrayed the behaviour of the Boers quite sympathetically, emphasising that he was "personally known to many of those earliest immigrants", some of whom had been his clients. Cloete also stressed that he had been an eye-witness to "several of the events which led to this expatriation" and suggested that he therefore

did not have to rely on the emotionally burdened accounts of embattled participants in the ethnic struggles which European settlers were still waging in Natal.[13]

Cloete perceived both general or indirect as well as specific causes of the Great Trek. He was certain that one could trace a primary motive for this migration to "the inherent roving disposition of man in general" and believed that this behaviour was especially pronounced amongst descendants of Germanic Europeans who had ranged far and wide "to gratify their wandering propensities".[14] Cloete did not attempt to develop this oblique assertion, however, or peg it specifically to the emigration of the late 1830s.

For that matter, neither did Cloete regard the currency reform in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope as appropriate for detailed consideration. He pointed out that in 1825 the British government replaced paper rixdollar with silver and exchanged one shilling and six pence of the latter for one rixdollar, whereas the latter had earlier been converted at fully four shillings per rixdollar. Cloete believed that this "ill-considered measure" "tended to keep up the [anti-British] excitement previously produced on the frontier, and caused that spirit of disaffection to become more generally and widely spread than it otherwise would have been". Nevertheless, he thought the issue was essentially relevant only to the domestic history of the Cape and therefore not pertinent to his discussion of the Great Trek.[15]

Cloete devoted most of his consideration of causes to "three great grievances" which he discussed in detail under the rubrics "The Hottentot Question", "The Slave Question", and "The Kafir Question". Written for British colonial readers, his treatment of each of these issues reflected his desire to present the Boers' historic grievances in a sympathetic light. Like many of his ethnic fellows, Cloete resented the cultural elevation of the Khoikhoi in the Cape, especially the establishment of mission schools for them. At these abodes of "ease and indolence", they acquired attitudes of racial equality and became convinced that they no longer were obliged to toil on the farms of European settlers. Focusing on resulting economic grievances of many Boers, he explained how these institutions drew large numbers of agricultural labourers from the farms on which they had long been employed. Many frontier colonists consequently had to give up farming and remove to other areas of Southern Africa "where they might obtain labour on more easy terms".[16]

Far more consequential, Cloete believed, than the elevation of free Khoikhoi was what many colonists perceived as "steps taken by the Government to deprive them of that labour over which they claimed an unquestionable right of property", *i.e.* their slaves. This manumission came gradually. As a prelude to final abolition of slavery, Cloete described in detail how many Boers

had successfully resisted with his assistance regulations that compelled them to maintain detailed records of punishments they meted out on their slaves. After Parliament voted for abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire, large numbers of Boers faced economic ruin. Exacerbating their plight, the financial compensation they were offered hardly began to defray the economic value of their erstwhile slaves, and those funds were payable only at the Bank of England, far from the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. Using a personal anecdote, Cloete related how he had received only about £47 for a slave for which he earlier had been offered £500 on the private market. Compounding the economic determinism in the ruin of many farmers in the Eastern Cape, large numbers of erstwhile slaves had migrated into cities and were therefore unavailable to be hired for wages. Consequently, Cloete asserted sympathetically, "the agriculturalists there found themselves totally deprived of every vestige of labour to improve of cultivate their farms, or even to superintend or herd their flocks".[17]

The third major grievance in Cloete's catalogue was the perceived threat of indigenous Africans throughout the Eastern Cape. His treatment of the armed conflicts between "Kafirs" and European settlers there, especially as the former sought to reclaim the lands of which they had been dispossessed, is relatively brief. Readers are left with the impression, however, that frequent thefts of cattle and other property contributed to the evolving feeling of hopelessness on the part of the region's farming population. Cloete had little positive to say about the colonial government in this regard. Despite more than a decade of perennial unrest, officials in Cape Town and elsewhere "did not wish to acknowledge the existence of a state of insecurity, which they either hoped would gradually pass away, or if admitted, would only compel them openly to declare and commence an active war". The aggrieved Boers, for their part, perceived in this lack of response a general and waxing indifference to their plight as their hope that their grievances would be redressed gradually receded.[18]

One overall impression that one gets from reading Cloete's *Five Lectures* more than a century after he delivered them is his unveiled desire to paint the Boers as an economically threatened and, by the mid-1830s, virtually hopeless ethnic group forced out of their homes by a potent if unintentional confluence of political and especially economic factors which constricted their freedom and challenged their livelihood over a period of many years. Beyond this impression, it is striking in retrospect that the principal reasons Cloete cited as stimuli to the Great Trek all hinge on the maintenance of European colonial supremacy over indigenous African populations. This, of course, he nowhere stated explicitly; Cloete strove to engender sympathy for the Voortrekkers, not for their African antagonists. In this respect, *Five Lectures* set the tone for much that was subsequently

written in English about the Great Trek. It should also be borne in mind that while Cloete sought to present the Voortrekkers in a generally favourable light, he had no reason to extol the virtues of their leaders. The task of creating individual heroes would be left chiefly to Afrikaners after the turn of the twentieth century, as we shall see shortly.

The Reversal of George McCall Theal

The varying attitudes towards the Voortrekkers which Canadian-born George McCall Theal (1837-1919), widely acknowledged as the father of South African historiography, presented in his works illustrate the malleability of their legacy in the hands of a professional historian. The eminent historian of Afrikaner nationalism, Professor Floris A. van Jaarsveld, declared in 1963 that Theal had drastically shifted his attitudinal stance from essentially "anti-Voortrekker" in his *Compendium of the History and Geography of South Africa*, which was initially published in 1874, to "pro-Boer" in his *History of the Boers in South Africa*, which appeared in 1887. Van Jaarsveld suggested that this *metanoia* occurred "perhaps under the influence of the actions of British Imperialism after 1877", *i.e.* the temporary British annexation of the Transvaal.[19] This arguably exaggerates the modification in Theal's interpretation.

In the discussion of the causes of the Great Trek in his *Compendium*, Theal neither described the early nineteenth-century British colonists in laudatory terms nor treated the Boers of that period calumniously. He explicitly criticised John Philip of the London Missionary Society for painting a favourable picture of indigenous Africans' moral virtues. Theal also faulted the British for failing to compensate Boer and other slaveholders adequately when their bondsmen were emancipated. This grossly unfair treatment, he insisted, "reduced to ruin" many farmers who had been "on the brink of bankruptcy" before Parliament in London voted to end slavery in the British Empire. Furthermore, the British had adopted a weak, vacillating policy with regard to protecting settlers on the eastern frontier. Theal did, however, give credit to British colonial officials for attempting to protect slaves from excessively severe punishment.[20] His picture of the Boers in this regard is, to be sure, generally unflattering. Theal emphasised that a delegation of slaveholders protested against the legislation intended to shield slaves from severe punishment and that "soon afterwards they had the gratification of learning that it was not to be enforced".[21] The causes of the massive emigration from the Cape during the 1830s he found chiefly in the "elevation of the Hottentots to a political equality with the whites" and, more so, the insecurity of settlers

in the Eastern Cape when British colonial officials proved either unwilling or unable to protect them adequately from raids by "Kaffirs". In nearly the same breath, however, Theal stressed that the Voortrekkers of the late 1830s were not breaking totally new ground. They were, in his view, continuing a tradition of semi-nomadcy which earlier farmers had followed in Southern Africa for well over a century.[22]

To be sure, Theal wrote his *History of the Boers in South Africa* in a consciously different vein. He acknowledged in his Preface that his research for this volume entailed a broader spectrum of sources than he had previously employed, including a large amount of Boer correspondence from the period of the Great Trek, and that one result was a decidedly more critical attitude towards British missionaries, particularly what he regarded as their severely distorted representations of the Boers, testimonies which were widely published in Britain.[23]

Theal unquestionably painted a generally salutary collective portrait of the Boers in this synoptical history. He could declare unabashedly that "no people not of British descent ever presented such favourable material for the formation of a dependency loyal to Britain as did those South African colonists, when forty years before they came, by conquest, under British rule". Theal therefore found it particularly lamentable that by the early years of the nineteenth century "the agents of the London [Missionary] Society and the Colonists had no other feeling towards each other than that of direct antagonism" and laid the primary blame for this tension on the former, particularly their unwillingness to see - and report - anything commendable in the Boers.[24]

Theal found it necessary to explain why these ostensibly ideal subjects of the British Crown chose to "abandon their homes, sacrifice whatever property could not be carried away, and flee from English rule as from the most hateful tyranny". He answered his question by reproducing *in extenso* the *Manifesto* which Piet Retief wrote in Grahamstown in January 1837 to enumerate the grievances which frontier Boers raised in relation to British colonial officials, missionaries, and others who, in their perception, had treated them unjustly. He regarded Retief's case as overstated in places but essentially valid. Furthermore, Theal found in Henry Cloete's *Five Lectures* additional complaints, though of secondary importance, such as the currency redemption of 1825 which gave holders of paper money only thirty-six hundredths of its nominal value, and the official substitution of English for the Dutch language two years later.[25]

At the same time, Theal sought to protect the Voortrekkers in general from post-Trek accusations that they had left the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope in order to flee debts and liberate themselves from various legal restraints. Those charges, he insisted, foundered on the rocks of well-known historical facts, especially the public character of the Great Trek: "The early

Emigrants constantly maintained that they left the Colony to free themselves not of law but of lawlessness. A few men of indifferent character may have gone with the stream, but the boast of the Emigrants as a body was that they left in open day and after their intentions had been publicly announced".[26]

Theal's presentation of the Voortrekkers and their reasons for leaving the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope is thus somewhat ambiguous. Just how influential this depiction was on subsequent historical writing is virtually impossible to gauge, although it should be noted that Gustav Preller acknowledged his indebtedness to Theal. There is no compelling reason to believe that the men who further developed the myth of the Voortrekkers early in the twentieth century wrote under the sway of Theal's works, and in any case they went far beyond him in their adulation of the emigrating farmers. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that the generally favourable portrayal of the Voortrekkers and the sympathetic analysis of their reasons for emigrating during the 1830s helped to prepare the ground for a more receptive reading of the Great Trek than otherwise would have been the case.

John Tudhope: Historiography in the Service of Political Union

Perhaps nothing exemplifies more vividly than John Tudhope's published lectures how a colonial Victorian could interpret the story of the Great Trek to serve a contemporary political purpose. Born in Edinburgh in 1835, Tudhope emigrated to the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope in 1840 and spent many years there as a civil servant. He represented Uitenhage in the Cape Parliament and became Colonial Secretary in 1884, a post he resigned five years later to become manager of the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company. In that booming city, Tudhope also served as the first chairman of the Transvaal National Union, one of the anti-Kruger organisations which Uitlanders in the South African Republic established in the late nineteenth century to defend their interests. Like Cecil John Rhodes and many other fellow Britons on the Witwatersrand and elsewhere in Southern Africa, Tudhope envisaged the incorporation of the two Afrikaner republics in a larger political and economic union under British hegemony. His interpretation of the Great Trek must be considered in the light of this grand aspiration.

Tudhope presented his avowedly tendentious explication of the Great Trek in two lectures delivered before the Literary and Debating Society of Pretoria on 17 August and 14 September 1891. In the Preface of the published version of these remarks, he declared that his lectures were

intended to counter "some of the ignorance" he had found "even in well-informed circles in Johannesburg respecting the stirring events which preceded and led up to the founding of the two Dutch Republics" and as a "contribution, however slight, to the great cause of Political Union in South Africa". The increasingly wealthy Tudhope may have underwritten the publication of his lectures. Curiously enough, they were printed late in 1891 not in Johannesburg but in Durban by P. Davis and Sons, the firm that long served as the Government Printer for the Colony of Natal.[27]

In some respects Tudhope's lectures were a latter-day analog to those Cloete had delivered in Pietermaritzburg some four decades earlier, although of course in terms of sources they varied enormously. Both men spoke primarily to Anglophone audiences, and both sought to underscore the potentially harmonious relations between Boers and colonial Britons. Tudhope was particularly emphatic in his treatment of this theme, although in doing so he revealed his Anglocentric prejudices which tempered his praise of the Boers. He optimistically perceived "evidences of the existence of a more cordial and fraternal spirit between the two great divisions of Europeans in South Africa" which was a prerequisite for the political unification he foresaw. "The English, on their part, recognise that, under the ignorant and stolid conservatism which characterises the bulk of their Dutch fellow-subjects, there is to be found a manly spirit of independence and love of freedom, combined with a sagacity of judgment, of immense value in the building up of a nation", this erstwhile colonial official allowed. At the same time, "on the part of the Dutch -- the more intelligent of them, at any rate -- there is an equally frank recognition of the good in the English character; of their higher culture, their intelligence and liberality", attributes which Tudhope regarded as essential for "the future United States of South Africa".[28]

Like Cloete, Tudhope emphasised the sincerity of the Voortrekkers as victims of historical circumstances in the Cape. He declared to his audience in Pretoria that "the first Voortrekkers and their leaders were mainly men of high character and standing, actuated by pure and worthy, even if mistaken, motives; that they suffered many real grievances and endured many substantial wrongs before resorting to the steps which seemed to them their only means of relief". Among the complaints which Tudhope regarded as legitimate were the granting of civil rights to the Khoi Khoi, which "gave great umbrage". Stressing their common ground, he generalised that "English settler and Dutch Boer alike protested against this measure as premature and likely to lead to serious trouble, but without avail". Secondly, Tudhope delineated the conditions under which slaves had been manumitted in the Cape and their erstwhile owners marginally compensated for this loss of personal property. In Tudhope's judgment, the consequences amounted to a

"calamity": "Never was the design of a noble and beneficent Act rendered by maladministration more utterly abortive". He also gave his audience a few details about attacks by Xhosa in the Eastern Cape during the mid-1830s which devastated farms in that region of the colony.[29]

Tudhope's account of the Great Trek itself was quite undistinguished. He described the participants in generally approving and occasionally laudatory terms while acknowledging the deprivations they had experienced and the many armed conflicts between the Voortrekkers and the "savages" through whose territory they migrated and whose villages they sometimes devastated. Bravery emerged as a pivotal virtue of the Voortrekkers in Tudhope's narrative. In this regard he described at moderately great length the Battle of Blood River. "The carnage was frightful; it was said that not less than 3,000 Zulus perished that day, while only three Boers were wounded, and Pretorius was one of the three. No wonder that so wonderful a victory was ascribed by them to a special interposition of Providence".[30]

Before turning our attention to the portrayal of the Great Trek by twentieth-century Afrikaners, we should emphasise that such writers of the Victorian era as Cloete, Theal, and Tudhope tended to devote most of their attention to broad themes of the Great Trek and its motivating factors, as well as the relation of that event to the general British presence in Southern Africa, rather than to lay their chief emphasis on individual Voortrekkers. They did, of course, consider men like Piet Retief and other leaders, though generally only as secondary themes. After the turn of the century, many Afrikaners took an almost diametrically opposite approach in recording their perceptions of the Great Trek by stressing both the broad contours of the migration and the men who led it. This would be a vital development in the unfolding of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers and their descendants which would face literary challenges during the 1930s.

Gustav Preller: Making the Word Become Flesh

Owing to such factors as the late emergence of Afrikaans as a written language, and the primitive state of an Afrikaans intellectual tradition in the nineteenth century, little in that language (or, for that matter, by Afrikaners in Dutch) was written about the history of the Great Trek before 1900. To be sure, there were exceptions. One was the children's novel, *David Malan*, which J.F. van Oordt wrote in Dutch in 1896 as the fifth volume in the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Historie-Bibliotheek*, an ambitious undertaking of the 1890s and the first few years of the twentieth century which aimed to impart especially to young Afrikaners a knowledge of their ethnic history through quasi-

fictitious literature. and which will be discussed at length in Chapter III. Another was the drama *Magrieta Prinsloo*, which Stephanus Jacobus du Toit (1847-1911) wrote at practically the same time. A Dutch Reformed *dominee* and Afrikaans linguist who was a co-founder of the *Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners* in 1875 and became the first editor of *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, the first newspaper in Afrikaans, the following year (but who, curiously enough, refused to support the two Boer republics in their resistance to British imperialism in 1899), this champion of Afrikanerdom could witness the initial performance of his first work for the theatre at the Paarl City Hall in 1897 while the Afrikaanse Taalkongres was meeting in that city. It is an historical drama encompassing twelve scenes from the Great Trek in which such Voortrekker leaders as Hendrik Potgieter and Piet Retief appear, but the general tone is not hagiographic.

The amount of material published in Afrikaans and Dutch about the Great Trek would change markedly shortly after the turn of the century. Complicating matters for the collective Afrikaans psyche, however, was the intervention of the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. That cataclysm not only ended the sovereignty of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State but also left a bitter legacy of defeat in the minds of countless Afrikaners, not least those who either endured life in concentration and prisoner-of-war camps or who lost loved ones in them. Van Jaarsveld thought that traumatic defeat and the temporary imposition of British hegemony on their two republics was of seminal importance in shaping not only subsequent Afrikaans writing about the Great Trek but also Afrikaans historiography in general with its conspicuous emphasis on heroic biographies: "A confused people that had lost its independence sought historical, and national sheet-anchors".[31] Amateur and professional historians responded to this need for heroes by writing during the first half of the twentieth century a relatively large number of books in which much of the emphasis was conveniently on leaders of the Great Trek and republican military commanders from the 1899-1902 war rather than on more inclusive interpretations of historical events. To be sure, more general studies of these two seminal events also appeared in Afrikaans, but in terms of popularity they were usually overshadowed by biographies of such leaders as Louis Trichardt, Hendrik Potgieter, Andries Pretorius, Gert Maritz, and Piet Retief. These latter volumes were pillars of the reassertion and ongoing evolution of the Voortrekker myth to buoy the spirits of a vanquished but by no means destroyed people.

The centre of gravity within the media was gradually shifting in South Africa as well as elsewhere, however, and visual imagery would soon occupy a central place in reconstructions of the Great Trek. Perhaps no person deserves more credit for causing the well-entrenched word of the Voortrekker myth to become flesh than Gustav Preller. It was he more than anyone else

who not only shaped the myth but also cemented a heroic image of the Voortrekkers in the minds of the general Afrikaans public. The literary challenges to the Voortrekker image of the 1930s were in large measure challenges to the tradition which this man had created. He and his legacy thus require consideration in some detail.

The circumstances of Preller's birth, participation in the 1899-1902 war, and early career as a journalist all played their parts in the shaping of his creation. Born in the South African Republic in 1875, this son of a farmer and minor governmental bureaucrat received relatively little formal education before many of his teachers left their profession to join the Witwatersrand gold rush. Young Gustav consequently became a shop assistant while a teenager and, after his family of origin moved back to Pretoria, began to work in the Department of Mines. During the Second Anglo-Boer War he underwent the embittering experience of being taken captive and sent to India as a prisoner-of-war. After enduring that status for a few months, Preller returned to occupied Pretoria and considered joining a minor exodus of Afrikaners to Argentina but instead accepted the editorship of a small newspaper, *Land en Volk*. A year later he became editor of *De Volksstem* (subsequently *De Volkstem*), which would become the official organ of the South African Party. During the 1920s, however, Preller joined the National Party and took the helm of its newspaper, *Ons Vaderland*. In addition to his demanding work as a journalist, this nationalistic young veteran of the war became an amateur historian. As Isabel Hofmeyr has pointed out, his unschooled practice of relying heavily on anecdotal and in many cases sensationalistic accounts which other former soldiers sent him exercised great influence on his perception of past events and the way in which he reconstructed them in writing.[32]

Preller's literary production as a popular historian was quantitatively impressive. In 1904 he published his *Onze Krijgs-Officieren*, a volume of brief biographies of high-ranking military men from the Transvaal. Turning his attention to the Great Trek, Preller then wrote his *Piet Retief*, initially publishing it serially this heroic biography in *De Volkstem* and later as a separate volume. In 1918 he began to publish *Voortrekkermense*, a five-part series which was not completed until 1939, *i.e.* shortly after the festivities commemorating the centenary of the Great Trek. Along the way, Preller completed his biography of Andries Pretorius in 1937. Other works, many of them quite short, complemented these pillars of his reconstruction of the Voortrekkers. Several of Preller's books went through several printings, testifying to popular interest in the Great Trek and intimately related historical matters. One of Preller's sympathetic biographers has aptly concluded that "his explicit aim was to acquaint his despondent countrymen with their heroic past, so that their pride might restore their courage and their hope for the future; he led them to a discovery of their past".[33]

During this period Preller also emerged as a highly visible leader of the *Tweede Afrikaanse Taalbeweging*, or second Afrikaans language movement, to popularise Afrikaans as a written medium of communication and gain for it legal recognition as an official language of the Union of South Africa. This was another significant dimension of his nationalism.

In her enlightening dissection of Preller's nationalistic *Weltanschauung* and view of Afrikaans history, Hofmeyr has underscored his propensity for the heroic and his general captivity in a Manichaean scheme of good and evil directly linked to black and white race relations. The Voortrekkers and their descendants are almost invariably the exemplars of morality and bearers of civilisation, while indigenous Africans are their blood-thirsty enemies. Rather than even attempting to write dispassionate, detached history, Preller thus perceived moral lessons in historical events and used them to proclaim his gospel of the heroic quality of the Afrikaans past. It is difficult to disagree with Hofmeyr's severe indictment of the resulting distortions of the general subject:

> In so far as Preller's texts and images set out to make people remember, they undoubtedly succeeded. However, in their inversions, repressions, silences, ellipses and displacements, his works institutionalise forgetfulness as much as recall. Given that amnesia is a common trait of much South African literature and history, Preller's work belongs to a well established tradition. However, within this absent-minded school Preller and the historians who follow him closely are exceptional largely because of the astonishing reversals that they have managed to institutionalise. In terms of these brazen inversions, the slavers have become the apparently enslaved; the transgressors, the transgressed against; the destroyers of hospitality, the hospitable; and the perpetrators of violence, the perpetrated against.[34]

For that matter, some Afrikaans professional historians overcame their erstwhile captivity to nationalist historiography and eventually dismissed Preller as a mediocrity. In 1975, for example, Professor B.J. Liebenberg of the University of South Africa allowed that while Preller could be credited for his prolificacy, respect for Afrikaans history, and powerful imagery, obvious weaknesses outweighed these strengths: "Aan die debietkant staan: hy was buitengewoon subjektief; he was geneig om te fantaseer; en hy was baie onnoukeurig. Heerdie gebreke in sy werk laat die skaal sterk teen hom kantel". Liebenberg consequently assigned Preller to a lower niche in the pantheon of Afrikaans historians. "Die finale toets vir 'n historikus sal trouens altyd bly die vraag na die

betroubaarheid van sy werk", he explained. "En omdat Preller in hierdie toets nie kan slaag nie, kan hy nie onder die grootste Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywers gereken word nie".[35]

It can hardly be overemphasised that Preller's reconstruction of Afrikaner history went well beyond the printed word. Notwithstanding his fascination with the nineteenth century, he was artistically a man of the twentieth. Preller understood well and repeatedly stressed the importance of visual images for shaping opinions and perceptions, in this case the collective Afrikaans memory of the Great Trek and its aftermath. Hofmeyr reports that he "concocted" an idealised version of Voortrekker attire which soon became anchored in the popular mind. Preller's almost hagiographic treatment of Piet Retief, moreover, included the preservation and display of his home in the Eastern Cape, his grave, and his flask. The Retief homestead was even featured as the motif on a Christmas card, yet another linkage of Afrikaner nationalism and religion.[36]

Preller's greatest contribution to the imagery of the Great Trek, however, probably lay in his work as a scriptwriter for the popular if controversial film of 1916, *De Voortrekkers/Winning a Continent*. As Edwin Hees has pointed out, this cinematic project was aimed in large measure at British audiences and consequently avoids the matter of British colonial maladministration which Afrikaners had long regarded as the *primus motor* of the Great Trek. Nevertheless, Preller's sufficiently glorified the Voortrekkers in his script and made strained race relations of the 1830s relevant enough to those of the 1930s so that "the film was immediately appropriated by Afrikaner nationalist movements, with Preller's prompting certainly, to represent their struggle against hostile forces, namely English economic power and a rising black nationalism that was becoming increasingly assertive and even aggressive".[37]

The Myth As Graven Image: The Voortrekker Monument

Perhaps nothing stands as a more concrete and conspicuous manifestation of the fully developed Voortrekker myth than the massive monument that was constructed during the 1930s and 1940s in remembrance of the emigrating Boers. Precisely when and where the idea of such a shrine was spawned is impossible to ascertain. It is entirely conceivable that as the list of publications lauding the Voortrekkers grew early in the twentieth century increasing numbers of their descendants thought about erecting one. For that matter, P.J.J. Prinsloo has found evidence of various committees established for that purpose as early as the 1860s in Natal. The Natal Synod

of the Dutch Reformed Church was one of many participants in these early efforts which, however, did not achieve that principal objective.[38] On the other hand, the Voortrekker Museum opened its doors in Pietermaritzburg in 1912, more specifically on 16 December, the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River, a day of the year which would play a recurrent rôle in the history of events commemorating the Great Trek. The seminal event which eventually led to the renowned structure near Pretoria was the formation of the *Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee* at a meeting of the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigingе* in 1931. The committee was chaired by an advocate, E.G. Jansen, a member of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* who had become Speaker of the House of Assembly in 1924. Had his committee not been formed several years in advance, it is questionable whether anything of significance could have been accomplished before the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938.[39]

Even the establishment of this committee did not lead quickly to the erection of a monument. Attempts to raise a massive amount of money from private sources to complement governmental subsidies while the South African economy was sailing through constricted straits proved difficult, and collections fell far short of projections for several years. Visions of completing the monument in time to open it during the centenary festivities thus proved unrealistic. Nevertheless, the chief architect who was retained to design the structure, Gerard Moeredijk, pressed ahead with his plans, which by his own testimony were inspired not only by the massive *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* near Leipzig but also by *inter alia* the pyramids of Egypt, *Les Invalides* in Paris, and the Taj Mahal in India.[40] The foundation stone was laid on 16 December 1938 as one of the culminating events of the Great Trek centenary. Owing partly to the disruption caused by the Second World War, however, the Voortrekker Monument was not completed for more than a decade. Forty metres high and standing on a basis forty by forty metres, it was unveiled on 16 December 1949 in the presence of hundreds of thousands of Afrikaners. As Elizabeth Delmont and others have pointed out, both the structure and publications which explain its significance bear bold testimony to its significance as a symbol of central elements of the Voortrekker myth, *e.g.* the bravery of the Afrikaners involved in the migration, the divine sanction for their settlement of areas outside the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, and the part the Great Trek played in propagating civilisation in Southern Africa.[41]

Afrikaans Youth - A Disgrace to the Voortrekker Legacy?

From time to time during the 1930s, culturally conservative Afrikaners expressed their dismay at the cultural path which the younger generation was taking, particularly in urban areas. Moral decadence, it seemed to them, was replacing at an appalling pace what they believed had been the virtues of the Voortrekkers. One such alarmist whose words of caution coincided with the controversy over *Turning Wheels* was Mrs E.C. Louw, Deputy Commandant of the Voortrekker Movement. On Dingaan's Day, 16 December 1937, she delivered a lament-filled speech at Wonderboom on the north side of Pretoria. "Although to-day we are a bigger nation, I feel that we are far short of the ideals and beliefs of our ancestors", averred Louw, who thought that erecting the planned Voortrekker monument would be a step in the direction of restoring lofty ideals. "The main reason is that to-day our people are sinking so rapidly that it seems as if it is too late to save them, because the deterioration is so deeply rooted in our youth". On the distaff side, she perceived alarming parallels between the practices of Afrikaans girls and indigenous women: "In the Eastern Province, the native woman smears her face with red clay and smokes a pipe while she works in the field with her baby on her back. Have you noticed how our Afrikaans daughters smear their faces with cosmetics and also smoke?" These customs, Louw insisted, were "not at all like the daughters of the Voortrekkers". Extending her list of accusations, she found it disturbing that Afrikaans girls were wearing shorts, a practice which she believed not only reduced their esteem in the eyes of male Afrikaners but, more seriously, cost them the respect of the "natives". Louw did not explain the basis of this last comparison. Male Afrikaners did not fare any better in her speech. "They play with strong alcoholic drink until there is (in small dorps, as well as the towns) incredible drunkenness", Louw complained. This degeneracy was further diminishing their chances of successfully navigating the already constricted straits of the South African economy: "Mining employees say that they can recognise the Afrikaans youth easily because of his slovenly appearance. They seek employment in open-neck shirts, unshaven, wearing crumpled suits, dirty hands and shoes, and with a lighted cigarette dangling from their lips or hands. These youths include not only the uneducated but also university graduates". Louw admitted that her remarks might offend part of her audience but nevertheless stated that she could catalogue "many other evils" which were eroding the moral foundation of Afrikanerdom. "The best advice is to return to the guidance that assisted the Voortrekkers", she concluded.[42]

Louw's was by no means a solitary voice at that time. In Durban, S.T. van der Walt, a Dutch Reformed minister, echoed an unmistakably similar lamentation at a Dingaan's Day celebration in Congella Park. He criticised girls who walked about wearing trousers and smoking cigarettes, asserting that by doing so they removed themselves from the circle of authentic Afrikanerdom. Turning his attention to the sphere of education, this distressed divine complained of a surfeit of "public school" atmosphere in the instructional institutions of South Africa and accused many teachers of being imbued with it. This, he believed, limited their freedom to educate children in the spirit of Afrikanerdom. The ongoing intrusion of English civilisation also jeopardised the cultural identity which had been familiar to Afrikaners. Particularly in the erstwhile British colony of Natal, he had found that "too often in Afrikaans homes only English newspapers and periodicals were to be found, and the chief interest was in the cartoons and sporting news. This should not be when there were Afrikaans newspapers and periodicals available". Van der Walt deplored the lack of unity in the political world, as well. "Even our politics lack the true Afrikaner spirit, and because of this we find Afrikaner divided against Afrikaner".[43] What he failed to explain, however, was what the Afrikaner spirit was.

Re-enacting the Great Trek

A focal point of the centenary was the re-enactment in an idealised form of part of the Great Trek in 1938. This pageant was one of the earliest and greatest triumphs of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond*. In Chapter V we shall treat the origins and early growth of this secret ethnic society as part of our broader consideration of how Afrikaner nationalism and the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers, which had developed hand in hand early in the twentieth century, were given greater institutional structure through the rise of Afrikaans cultural organisations. In the present section, we shall examine how the re-enactment of the Great Trek, perhaps to a greater degree than any other single event, captured the attention of Afrikaners throughout much of the Union of South Africa and gained extensive publicity for the collective ethnic group memory of the Voortrekkers.

Precisely when the idea of this re-enactment was conceived is unknown, but in any case it was discussed at the annual congress of the *Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereninging* of the South African Railways and Harbours (of which *Afrikaner-Broederbond* founder Henning Klopper was also one creator) in Hartenbos near Mossel Bay in April 1937. Delegates unanimously approved Klopper's suggestion that the ATKV construct of stinkwood a replica of an ox wagon for use in the centenary.

The original idea appears to have been dropped, however, only to be revived in a modified form the following year. During the first few months of 1938 it was proposed within the ATKV that *two* wagons be constructed and send on separate routes, one to Pretoria and the other to Blood River (*i.e.* the site of the historic battle where on 16 December 1838 a relatively small number of Voortrekkers had decimated a vastly greater Zulu army and thereby, in the opinion of many Afrikaners, helped to guarantee the success of the Great Trek. With great if belated effort, two wagons were in fact constructed.[44] They formed the nucleus of the re-enactment which began at the Van Riebeeck Monument in central Cape Town on 8 August with Klopper and his wife among the dozen people in each wagon, which was drawn by fourteen oxen.[45]

A brief consideration of the first few days of the trek reveals its tremendous popularity and the enthusiasm it engendered amongst Afrikaners and underscores the immense planning that had been done by organisers of the centenary. On the first day the two wagons rolled only to Goodwood east of Cape Town, where reportedly 10 000 people attended a *braaifleisaand* and heard Speaker of the House of Assembly Jansen speak. Taking an approach to ethnic relations different from that of men like D.F. Malan, this Natalian stressed the need for co-operation between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans in addressing the nation's domestic tribulations.[46] On the afternoon of the second day, one of the ox wagons approached Stellenbosch, long a centre of Afrikaner nationalism, and was met by a commando of approximately 100 horsemen at Vlottenburg and escorted it into *Eikestad*. (The other wagon had taken a different route and was *en route* to Philadelphia and Tulbagh.) More than 1 000 school pupils joined the procession and led it down historic Dorp Straat. Shops closed for the afternoon, and balconies in Stellenbosch were reportedly crowded with enthusiastic spectators. Various speakers, including Professor E.C. Pienaar of the Department of Afrikaans and Nederlands at the University of Stellenbosch (who, as we shall see in Chapter X, had the previous year participated in a protest meeting against Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels* and suggested that corporal punishment be inflicted on people who denigrated the Voortrekkers), addressed the throng on the Braak in the centre of the city.[47] During the first week of the re-enactment, radio broadcasts from Cape Town covered the progress of the ox wagons every evening from 20h15 until 20h35.[48]

Yet the geographical scope and sheer magnitude of the pageantry grew far beyond expectations as the novelty of the idea grasped the attention of Afrikaners throughout much of South Africa. The two ATKV wagons stimulated many other groups to follow suit. Eventually oxen were drawing similar vehicles, some of them more than a century old, others replicas manufactured for the occasion, from many corners of the Union along what was collectively known

as "the Road of South Africa" to Pretoria. "Allover the country men started growing beards an women fashioned Voortrekker dress for the day the wagons would reach their district", wrote two retrospective analysts of the occasion. "Town and city councils renamed streets, squares and buildings in honour of the Voortrekkers, sometimes creating disputes between Afrikaans- and English-speaking members of the communities". In many instances mmbers of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* served on committees to welcome one or more ox wagons to their towns. This, too, contributed to ethnic pride: "They made the most of their opportunity to stress Afrikaner unity, the need for a republic and the dominant role to be played by Afrikaners in South Africa".[49]

Not only Afrikaners participated in this re-enactment and attended the laying of the cornerstone of the Voortrekker Monument. These events actually attracted many Anglophone South Africans whose observations of the pageant provide insight into it from a unique perspective that was at once both internal, from the viewpoint of their participation, and external, in terms of ethnic identity. One of the more articulate of these compatriots was Alan Paton, a decade before he began to gain international renown as the author of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The director of a reformatory for delinquent African youths at Diepkloof at the time of the Great Trek centenary, Paton declared in his autobiography that in the late 1930s his "pro-Afrikaner feelings were at their strongest". Prompted in part by the enthusiasm of his Afrikaans colleagues at Diepkloof, he followed suit and grew a beard in accord with the celebratory spirit of the centenary. Paton and some of his associates received permission from their superiors to borrow a wagon and oxen from the reformatory and drive it from Johannesburg to Pretoria. "The wagon flew the *vierkleur*, the flag of the defeated Transvaal republic", he recalled, "and we wore Voortrekker clothing, carried muskets and Bibles, and great quantities of *boerewors*, *sosaties*, *frikkadelle*, and good coarse loaves which had been baked in an old Dutch oven". Paton also recorded defiantly anti-English comments he heard at the site of the future Voortrekker Monument. His summary of the atmosphere merits quotation: "The most notable characteristics of this immense gathering were its fervour and its exclusiveness. The theme of every meeting was Afrikanerdom, its glory, its struggles, its griefs, its achievements".[50] The motif of narrow-gauged ethnic heroism, in other words, dominated the festivities.

The Centenary in Afrikaans Popular and Religious Magazines

By no means was journalistic coverage of the Great Trek centenary in 1938 and its lengthy prelude limited to special coteries of Afrikaners who evinced keen interest in their ethnic history. Both Afrikaans popular and Dutch Reformed periodicals devoted a great deal of space to the event beginning in the mid-1930s, indicating the extent to which large numbers of their readers were exposed to the commemoration. We shall limit our consideration of this matter to two representative and immensely popular journals, namely *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Kerkbode*, paying special attention to how their representation of the Voortrekkers reinforced the heroic image that Preller and others had constructed earlier in the twentieth century.

Founded in 1916 as the first Afrikaans popular weekly magazine, *Die Huisgenoot* soon became a fixture on the cultural landscape of Afrikanerdom. By the late 1930s it enjoyed a circulation of nearly 40 000. Under the leadership of J.M.H. Viljoen (1898-1949), who became editor-in-chief in 1931, *Die Huisgenoot* became a somewhat more sophisticated, marginally cosmopolitan journal on par with many South African English magazines. In the quantity of its coverage of the Great Trek centenary, moreover, it was probably unsurpassed. At least as early as 1936 *Huisgenoot* began to give considerable coverage to the planned observance. That year's issue of 11 December was dedicated to the Boer migration, whose historical significance Viljoen thought it virtually impossible to exaggerate. "Die Groot Trek word tereg die sentrale gebeurtenis in die veelbewoë geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika genoem", reasoned the unreserved young editor in an accompanying leading article, "want byna alle vername gebeurtenisse wat sedert 1836 in Suid-Afrika plaasgevind het, was 'n uitvloeisel daarvan".[51] This issue included several individual biographical pieces about Andries Hendrik Potgieter, Piet Retief, Sarel Cilliers, Gerrit Maritz, and Andries Pretorius whose "great man" character harmonised with the Preller school of popular Afrikaans historiography, artifact-orientated essays about "Die Voortrekker se Roer" and "Die Voortrekker se Perd", and, specifically designated for female readers, pieces on "Die Vrou in die Groot Trek", "Hoe het die Voortrekker-vrou Gewoon?", and "Voortrekker-kleredrag". In the long-awaited year of 1938, scores of photos and thousands of words of text about the centenary competed for space in *Die Huisgenoot* with coverage of such contemporary events as Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland and advertisements for Chevrolet touring sedans and V-8 Fords. From week to week readers could follow the progress of ox wagons from the Cape to Pretoria as the Great Trek was re-enacted for four months on a small if immensely popular scale..

Die Huisgenoot's coverage of the centenary culminated in a special issue dated December 1938. Spanning nearly 200 pages, this commemorative publication carried more than fifty articles as well as dozens of coloured and black and white photographs, advertisements for books about the Great Trek, and other memorabilia. True to the form of popular Afrikaans historiography, five of the articles were laudatory pieces about heroic Voortrekker leaders Piet Retief, Andries Pretorius, Andries Hendrik Potgieter, Gert Maritz, and Sarel Cilliers. Other articles covered such standard fare as the Battle of Blood River, Voortrekker wagons, Retief's *Manifesto*, and Voortrekker clothing. The overarching tone of these essays was one of respect for the intrepid pioneers and gratitude for the legacy they had given their descendants. One partial exception was written by Professor Leo Fouché of the University of the Witwatersrand, an intellectually independent Afrikaner who, as we shall see shortly, had taken a critical attitude towards certain aspects of Afrikaner nationalism several years earlier while teaching at the University of Pretoria. Writing about the potentially controversial topic "Die Karakter van die Voortrekkers", Fouché did not castigate the emigrating Boers generally but did emphasise their Calvinist belief in their destiny and conviction that racial supremacy was divinely inspired. His conclusion was succinct: "Hierdie twee karaktertrekke -- die trekgees en die byna fatalistiese geloof dat hulle 'n uitverkore volk was -- gee ons die sleutel tot die siel van die Voortrekker".[52] *Die Huisgenoot* was not, it must be emphasised, an official organ of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond*, but at this seminal point in the history of that secret society Viljoen's magazine performed an invaluable rôle in promoting broad Afrikaans interest in the centenary which, arguably more than any other event during the first two decades of its existence, propelled the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* into a position of great influence in South African society

Die Kerkbode, the official weekly organ of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, also served as a noteworthy vehicle for popularising the centenary. Its rôle in this regard is particularly significant because even though the leadership of that denomination did not endorse the Great Trek (indeed, many dominees in the Cape vehemently opposed the departure of their lay people for parts unknown deep in the interior of southern Africa), most of the migrating Boers were members of that church. Furthermore, by early in the twentieth century religious interpretations had been imposed on the Great Trek in general and particularly on such crucial episodes of it as the Battle of Blood River.

The centenary inspired a considerable amount of material published in *Die Kerkbode* in 1938, culminating in a commemorative issue on 23 November. The emphasis on that number was, predictably, on religious dimensions of the Great Trek, which several commentators perceived

as a providential event. Yet some of these Calvinists were quick to point out that ultimately religion is interwoven with the secular world. In an article titled "Die Hand van God in Ons Geskiedenis", for example, Dr John Daniel Kestell (1854-1941) paid tribute to the rôle of the Voortrekkers in contributing to the formation of Afrikaner nationalism, although he did not explain how their migration had helped to shape that sense of identity. In any case, this learned commentator perceived something of much greater significance than ethnicity in the Great Trek. "Maar ons wil ook terugsien op wat nog veel dieper is as die volksgevoel van die Voortrekkers", he declared. "Van groter betekenis as die vryheidsin van die stoere baanbrekers is wat diep daaronder gelê het - hul godsdienssin. Hul godsvertroue het vir hulle nog dieper gelê as hul verlange na die vryheid". Kestell conceded that "in die begin het die Kerk nie die hand van God in die geskiedenis van die Voortrekkers gesien nie" and cited the opposition of the Cape Synod of 1837 to the emigration as evidence of this spiritual myopia. He insisted, however, that subsequently the Dutch Reformed Church had recognised the divine factor in leading many of its members away from the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope and noted that eventually many of that denomination's clergymen had gone to the Orange Free State and the South African Republic to minister to the spiritual needs of the Voortrekkers. Furthermore, Kestell pointed out as seemingly self-evident proof of the working of God in the migration that the Voortrekkers "daarin dat dit hulle was wat die weg begaan het na die hart van Donker Afrika". Owing to the path these pioneers had blazed to the Limpopo and beyond, eventually "het die dag gekom dat die Kerk die fakkel laat brand het op Soutspansberg, en later, al dieper in die duisternis in tot op die oewers van die Nyasameer". Writing for sympathetic Dutch Reformed readers at a time of heightened ethnic fervour, to Kestell the divine element in the history of the Great Trek seemed obvious. He concluded: "Wie is daar vandag, in hierdie jaar van eeufeeste, hierdie jaar waarin ons die ossewa volg op die Pad van Suid-Afrika, wie is daar wat daaraan twyfel dat Gods hand in die geskiedenis van die Voortrekkers is?"[53] Curiously enough, Kestell was the son of an 1820 Settler from Devonshire who in 1845 had taken residence in Pietermaritzburg, where John Daniel was born. He himself had received his spiritual nurture in that city's Dutch Reformed Church, where his father was a prominent layman, and become a minister in that denomination. Kestell served as a chaplain in the Second Anglo-Boer War and early in the twentieth century gained prominence as both a Bible translator and advocate of Afrikaners' linguistic rights. In 1919 he assumed the editorship of *De Kerkbode*.[54]

In the same commemorative issue of *Die Kerkbode*, another theologian, Dr S.H. Rossouw, lauded the Voortrekkers as exemplary people who had carried the torch along "Die Pad van

Suid-Afrika". Himself treading on familiar ground, Rossouw reproduced brief accounts of the hangings at Slagtersnek, the supplanting of Dutch by English as the official language of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, and "die onveiligheid van lewe en eiendom in die Oostelike distrikte en hul blootstelling aan die invalle van die inboorlinge" as factors which prompted innocent Boers to leave their homes for parts unknown. He also cited the sympathy of the London Missionary Society's representatives to the Coloureds as a causative factor: "Hul gelykstelling met die witman was 'n gruwel in die oog van die patriotiese boere". Furthermore, "Die plotselinge vryverklaring van die slawe sonder genoegsame vergoeding het baie Boere finansieele groot skade berokken. Die emansipasie was in ander woorde 'n letterlike konfiskasie van eiendom en daarteen was die groot protes van regsgevoel". Rossouw revealed his ignorance of race relations during the Great Trek, however, by asserting that "die Boere self het later tog geen slawerny toegelaat op die trekpad nie".[55] This Dutch Reformed theologian, in brief, depicted the Voortrekkers as idealistic sufferers who did virtually nothing repugnant while playing their divinely ordained part in the history of Southern Africa.

A third Dutch Reformed clergyman, A.P. Smit, adhered closely to what had become a convention in Afrikaner history, especially that of the Great Trek, by lauding a particular Voortrekker as an instrument of the divine. In his tripartite serial article titled "Sarel Cilliers as Volksman en Godsman", Smit heralded this native of Klein Drakenstein, whose religious fervour was already a familiar theme in histories of the migration. He laid particular emphasis on Cilliers's part as a Christian layman in encouraging large numbers of migrating Boers, most of whom lacked the regular ministrations of an ordained clergyman, to maintain their faith. Smit also underscored the importance of Cilliers as "die Vader van Dingaansdag" in commemoration of the Voortrekkers' victory in overcoming a seemingly overwhelming numerical disadvantage at the Battle of Blood River. Again, one finds in this an intimate linking of Afrikaans history, religion, and racial supremacy.[56]

A final familiar theme which certain leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church employed in *Die Kerkbode* was to adduce Voortrekkers as models to be emulated in the morally challenging 1930s. In this case the crucial issue was women's clothing. Writing under the alarming title "Sedelike Gevare", Dr Dwight Randolph Snyman (1891-1978), a theologically conservative *dominee* in Stellenbosch who had earned master and doctoral degrees at Presbyterian seminaries in the United States of America, reported from the Cape in December 1938 that at a recent meeting of the Stellenbosse Ringsvergadering delegates had passed a resolution regretting "die skadelike invloed wat uitgeoefen word deur die skrale kleredrag waarin die dames soms verskyn, en doen 'n ernstige

beroep op alle lede van die Ned. Geref. Kerk om hul kleredrag te laat wees in ooreenstemming met die sedelike oortuigings en tradisies van ons Kerk en volk . . .". To Snyman, the answer to this burning issue was obvious and timely. "In hierdie Eeufeesjar dink ons veral ook terug aan die Voortrekkervrou", he wrote. This *dominee* averred that "die gebruikmaak van skrale kleredrag is niks minder as 'n verloëning van die Voortrekkervrou". Lauding the female attire of a century earlier, he put forth a word of advice to rectify the allegedly immoral dress of contemporary girls: "Sal die moeders van ons volk die opkomende geslag dan nie weer terugvoer na 'n kiese kleredrag, wat in ooreenstemming is met ons afkoms en veral met ons godsdiens nie?"[57]

Daniël François Malan as Mouthpiece of the Heroic Myth

While many Afrikaners made rhetorical use of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers, few did so in a more explicitly political way than the prominent National Party politician Daniël François Malan, who invoked it in one speech after another during the 1930s and beyond. His case is particularly relevant to the present study because, as we shall see in Chapter VII, this Afrikaner nationalist had been intimately involved in the campaign against Henry Parkyn Lamont only a few years earlier. Owing to the part Malan would play as the first prime minister of the post-1948 apartheid era in the Union of South Africa, too much has been written about him to require detailed consideration of his biography here. In brief, this descendant of late seventeenth-century Huguenot immigrants was born on the farm Allesverloren near Riebek West in 1874, received a Master of Arts in philosophy at Victoria College (subsequently the University of Stellenbosch), and earned a doctorate in theology from the University of Utrecht in 1905. After returning to the Cape, Malan served as a *dominee* in the Dutch Reformed Church and earned a reputation as an advocate of Afrikaans culture, not least through his involvement in the founding of the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Akademie voor Taal, Letteren en Kunst*. In harmony with this, he was also active in the movement to gain legal status for Afrikaans. In 1915 Malan was convinced to demit his Christian ministry in order to become the first editor of *De Burger*, the Cape Town newspaper which served as the organ of the recently launched National Party. His first editorial, titled "Aan allen, die ons volk liefhebben", presaged his decades of struggle on behalf of the interests of Afrikaners generally, whom he perceived as as national group characterised by defeat at the hands of the British Empire, the loss of independence by the two Boer republics, and divided by the ill-conceived rebellion of 1915 against the Louis Botha government. This seminal editorial presaged

decades of appeals to the history of Afrikanerdom in which the future prime minister found an arsenal from which to take rhetorical weapons for his struggle against everything and everyone he perceived as hostile to Afrikaner nationalism and the advancement of Afrikaners. The overriding tone was one of group self-pity. "'De Burger' is een kind van de smart en van de hoop. Hij is geboren uit de weeën van ons volk", Malan confessed. He also revealed his ethnic bitterness and questioned the precepts on which the Union of South Africa had been founded as a multi-ethnic society in which Afrikaners did not exclusive sovereignty. "Dezelfde stat sluit ons vandaag allen in. Unie is zijn naam. Maar onze harten zijn verscheurd en ons volksleven is verbitterd". This, too, was expressed in a context of collective self-pity: "Wij drinken de wateren van Mara. Wereldse grootheid heeft ons klein volkje vroeger nooit gekend. Wij hebben dit ook nooit begeerd. De grote wereld wist van ons haast niet anders dan door ons lijden. Onze leidslieden hadden geen wereldreputatie, maar zij behoorden in de ware werkelikheid destemeer tot Zuid-Afrika".[58]

Malan was elected chairman of the National Party in the Cape that same year and, although defeated in his first attempt to be elected to Parliament, was subsequently successful and became a fixture on the South African political landscape until his death in 1954. He served under Barry Hertzog as Minister of the Interior in the early 1930s and gained renown for his lengthy but captivating speeches in Parliament. After the merger of the Hertzog faction of the National Party with the South African Party of Jan Smuts, Malan gained increasing national prominence as the head of the remnant of his party that remained aloof of the new fused United Party.

The centenary of the Great Trek provided a platform on which Malan could further lionise the Voortrekkers and exploit their legacy for the political purposes of the National Party and the advancement of Afrikaners. His perception of history was crassly oversimplified, yet it served his political interests well. His rhetoric during 1938 evinces abundant use of the Voortrekker theme, usually by underscoring the unity of contemporary Afrikaners with the Boers a century earlier and by insisting that the struggle of the Voortrekkers was being repeated, *mutatis mutandis*, in his own day with regard to such interlocking issues of race relations, Afrikaner self-determination, and British hegemony. Speaking at the Union congress of his party in Bloemfontein on 8 November, for example, Malan warned that between 1911 an 1936 the white population of the Union of South Africa had increased at a average annual rate of only 1.86 per cent, while the number of blacks and Coloureds had grown by 2.29 and 2.31 per cent, respectively, *per annum* during that same period. Pointing out that "kennis is magt", he also pointed out that the threat of the non-whites to white power was greater than these statistics indicated, because the number of non-white children attending school had increased twice as rapidly (*i.e.* by fully 254 per cent)

as that of their white counterparts between 1911 and 1936. As if the waxing numbers of non-whites in the Union and its educational systems were not in itself enough to alarm his Nationalist audience, Malan broached the issue of demands for racial equality: "Maar om as 'n blanke minderheid te staan teenoor 'n geweldige oormag van beskaafde en opgevoede nie-blankes wat ons lewensbestaan met ons wil del, en wat in alle opsigte na gelykheid met ons strewe, is gans iets anders". Linking "die Kommunisme en die Liberalisme" in one breath as ideological instruments of such demands for equality, he cautioned that "met hul leer van politieke en ekonomiese gellykheid en met die sosiale gelykstelling wat logies daaruit voortvloei en wat in sommige kringe alreeds prakties toegepas word, sny hul diep in tot aan die wortel van ons blanke volksbestaan". These trends militated against his expressed goal, and that of the National Party, "om Suid-Afrika veilig te maak vir die blanke ras en om die blanke ras, suiwer en bewus van sy roeping, veiling te bewaar vir Suid-Afrika .... Ons wil dit seker maak dat Suid-Afrika witmansland sal bly". Precisely how this would be accomplished Malan did not specify in this speech. He did, however, indicated in general terms that the answer could be found in the history of the Voortrekkers, for "die stryd van vandag is die stryd oom die Voortrekker se ideaal". Early in the nineteenth century, Malan explained, the Boer had "naas sy vryheidsideaal ook sy ideaal gehad van rassesuiwerheid en van die heerskappy van die blanke ras in die gees van voogdyskap". Harking back to the old bugbear of alleged British political and religious demands for racial equality, he declared that "die Britse regering end die Londense Sendinggenootskap met hul gelykstellingsidee" had frustrated these Voortrekker aspirations and thereby contributed to the launching of the Great Trek. Malan urged his audience to uphold the racial and political ideals and strategy of their ethnic forebears: "As u die maatreëls verwerp wat die omstandighede van vandag eis om Suid-Afrika witmansland te hou, dan verwerp u die Voortrekker, ook al versier u sy graf en al bou u sy monument". In a strikingly self-revelatory comment, he also noted that the veneration of the Voortrekkers in the "godgegewe geleentheid" provided by the centenary of the Great Trek was yielding a collective psychological benefit, in that "ons daarin besig is om op te staan uit ons toestand van minderwaardigheid en vernedering. Die gees van die Voortrekker roep ons op om te glo in ons saak en in onsself, omdat ons glo in God". Finally, this Dutch Reformed theologian perceived a potentially salvific factor in the invocation of a specific Voortrekker hero by his suffering ethnic descendants disciples of a latter day: "U roem Andries Pretorius. Sy naam is op u almal se lippe. Daar is 'n noodroep vandag van dieselfde blanke Afrikanerdom, meer gesmoor maar ernstiger, langduriger, smekender, wat tot u kom vanaf die meer moordende slagvelde in die middelpunte van ons beskawing". The supposed saviour of the Natal segment of the Great Trek in 1838 by

virtue of his success against Dingaan's forces at the Battle of Blood River, in other words, could also, by emulation, be the saviour of Afrikaners a century later. Precisely how his audience should do so, however, Malan did not explain.[59]

Speaking at the annual remembrance of that conflagration at Blood River thirty-eight days later, an event which was heralded as one climax of the Great Trek centenary, Malan sang the same tune in a different key by concentrating on relations between whites and non-whites in urban South Africa. Calling the accelerating urbanisation of the country the " Nuwe Groot Trek" and the "Groter Trek", he considered its implications in terms of the dangers it posed to what he regarded as the burning question for the future of Afrikanerdom: "Sal Suid-Afrika dan not witmansland wees?" In a speech laden with statistics, Malan informed his audience that according to the census of 1936, approximately 66 per cent of the Union's white population, including no fewer than 540 000 Afrikaners, lived in urban areas. This demographic shift did not mean, however, that South African cities were becoming whiter; owing to an even greater influx of indigenous Africans, "Hulle word swarter". Malan emphasised that the change was not merely quantitative but also had grave implications for the issue of South Africa's future from a white perspective. Noting that the typical Afrikaner who was leaving the *plaas* to seek employment in urban areas was compelled to eke out an existence "as 'n ongeskoolde of halfgeskoolde arbeider van sy handwerk". In this quite different milieu, whites no longer enjoyed positions of ethnic privilege, but, the concerned Malan lamented, were on an equal footing with non-whites: "Vir 'n groot deel ontvang hulle dieselfde beskermde lone, en sover as hulle georganiseerde vakmanne is, sit hulle dikwels ook op gelyke voet met mekaar in dieselfde vakbonde". This loss of vocational status, combined with the surge in the statistics of non-whites being educated in schools, did not augur well for the Afrikaner *volk* in its struggle for ethnic supremacy: "Die strydkanse verander, maar ten koste van die blanke". Again Malan declined to specify just then how this changing state of affairs should be addressed, apart from declaring obliquely that "die tyd is daar vir grondige, doeltreffende en desnoods drasstiese maatreëls". He did not at Blood River propose influx control or the exclusion of non-whites from schools. The historically minded National Party leader did, however, again invoke the spirit of the Voortrekkers and marshal his interpretation of the causes of the Great Trek in his rhetorical strategy. Malan urged his audience to remember and gain inspiration from their emigrating Boer ancestors: "By die gekreun van die ossewa sien u nou weer helder die sterre wat u voorvaders laat koers hou het deur Suid-Afrika se donkerste nag. Hull ster van vryheid blink helderder ook op u pad". To this racially obsessed politician, the *primus motor* which had propelled the Voortrekkers was not merely the desire for political autonomy,

but "ook, en veral, die vryheid om hulself as 'n blanke ras te beskerm". Malan admonished his hearers to do likewise: "Soos us dit nooit anders kon besef het nie, besef u vandag dat hulle koers u koers, dat hulle pad u pad is, en dat hulle taak om Suid-Afrika witmansland te maak, in tiendubbele mate ook u taak is".[60]

The Ethnic Heresy of Leo Fouché

Despite very widespread retrospect endorsement of the Great Trek in Afrikaans circles, it must be noted that Afrikaners did not speak univocally about that event or assent to the heroic depiction of its participants. During the 1930s one pre-eminent Afrikaans historian who had already been shunned by many of his ethnic fellows dissented vociferously from what had become the normative, one-sided image of the heroic Voortrekkers. Leo Fouché was truly a *rara avis* in the flock of early twentieth-century Afrikaners. His part in the debate over the meaning of the Great Trek is particularly relevant to this study because he was a colleague of H.P. Lamont and supported him in the dispute that racked the University of Pretoria in 1932 while many of their academic fellows took the opposite position. Born at Villiersdorp in 1880, this evidently gifted son of a school principal received a Bachelor of Arts at Victoria College (which later became the University of Stellenbosch) in 1903 before continuing his studies in Europe. Fouché heard lectures at universities in Leyden, Paris, and Berlin before earning his doctorate at the Rijksuniversiteit in Ghent in 1908. Returning to the land that would soon be constituted the Union of South Africa, he applied for a professorship in history at the newly founded Transvaal University College (subsequently called the University of Pretoria) in 1908 and was chosen over W.M. Macmillan, who subsequently enjoyed an equally distinguished academic career, for that post. During the next several years Fouché evinced the breadth of his scholarly competence by lecturing not only in history but also in philosophy, political science, and even psychology.[61]

In the eyes of his detractors, Fouche's seemingly impeccable ethnic credentials as an Afrikaner began to fray and were initially challenged during his first decade at Transvaal University College. After briefly serving as Jan Smuts's secretary in 1914, he wrote a report about the causes of the rebellion of that year. This critical document caused a minor furore amongst many Afrikaners, especially members of the new National Party, who accused him of allowing his loyalty to Smuts to undermine his objectivity as a historian. Other signs of his drifting from his ethnic moorings appeared within the next few years. Fouché married an Anglophone woman, Ernestine van der

Berg, from Johannesburg in 1919 and began to speak English extensively. Shortly after taking a wife, he stopped paying his dues to the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Taal, Lettere en Kuns and allowed his membership in that prominent Afrikaans cultural organisation to lapse in 1923.[62]

During the rest of that decade Fouché evinced little interest in supporting specifically Afrikaans causes, and in contrast to other Afrikaans historians he adamantly opposed the use of historiography as an instrument for promoting Afrikaner nationalism. These attitudes placed him on a collision course with the leadership of Transvaal University College and the *Afrikaner-Broederbond*, which in the late 1920s launched a campaign to end that institution's fifty-fifty policy of joint English- and Afrikaans-medium instruction and transform it into a monolingual university for the *volk*. After the appointment of Professor A.E. du Toit as rector in 1929 and the resignation of the Englishman Professor J.P.R. Wallis as Dean of the Faculty of Arts in 1932 and his succession in that post by Afrikaans advocate Professor H.G. Viljoen, Fouché's fate seemed sealed. His insistence on continuing to lecture in English even after the University of Pretoria became an officially Afrikaans institution further antagonised many of his colleagues. Fouché resigned under duress in 1934 and accepted a chair at the English-medium University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

Fouché endorsed the goals of the South African Institute of Race Relations, which had been founded in 1929 as an interracial body to promote ethnic harmony in the Union. In a symposium on the Great Trek published by the Institute in 1938, this professor aimed critical arrows at that historical event and what he regarded as its baleful legacy in the Union of South Africa. He flatly rejected the ethnocentric, exclusivist perception of the Great Trek that characterised Afrikaans attitudes towards it. Noting that "all the races in our country were involved" and that "British and Dutch, Bantu, Bushmen and Griquas -- even the Portuguese -- all had their part to play", this eminent historian judged that "to regard the Trek as the affair of one race only is mere perversity". Furthermore, Fouché challenged an article of Afrikaner faith by contending that the Great Trek could not be summarily regarded as a heroic event but rather as one which fitted well the criteria for a Greek drama, "a tragedy, a mingling of horrors and heroism, a record of high resolve, stark endurance and ultimate frustration -- a theme which would have inspired an Aeschylus". Fouché did not refer explicitly to the Aristotelian notion of a "flaw in character" being pivotal to classical tragedy, but he left little doubt that in their racial and religious beliefs and attitudes Voortrekkers had sowed the seeds of their own destruction. He referred to them as typically Calvinist "stoics" who regarded themselves as the elect and perceived "the heathen" as "children of Ham" who were foreordained to remain servants. In a related vein, Fouché

summarised the attitudes of Boers on the frontier towards indigenous Africans in terms of one aspect of what a later generation of literary critics would commonly call "the Other": "In the course of this long struggle they had come to look upon their Native enemies as creatures beyond the pale, heathen savages, who were separated from the Europeans by an impassable barrier -- racial, social and religious". When the British colonial government challenged their spiritually inspired belief in racial inequality and permanent separation, the Voortrekkers girded their loins "in a spirit of distrust and despair" and migrated, seeking "a new home, in which white supremacy would be maintained and preserved unchallenged". Beyond the borders of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, however, they did not find an uninhabited Garden of Eden, but rather considerable numbers of indigenes. The policies of racial separation and inequality they adopted in their new republics to ensure peace and security proved counterproductive; moreover, these policies contradicted the professed commitment of these pioneers to Christianity: "The Trekkers could not wash their hands of the Native. They had repudiated him as a brother. They would not be his keeper". Moreover, the Voortrekkers lived in constant fear of the indigenous population. In Natalia, at least, the resulting policy of strict separation backfired. In what is arguably a crass oversimplification of history, Fouché asserted that owing to the adoption of racial segregation, "the British Government intervened and annexed their infant Republic. Thus they [*i.e.* the Voortrekkers] lost their cherished independence largely through their Native policy".[63]

In a parting shot, Fouché drew a parallel between the racial policies which the Voortrekkers had adopted in their republics and National Party policies of nearly a century later. In both situations, he declared, fear of the indigenous majority dictated how governments would regulate race relations. That the policies of the nineteenth-century republics had proven counterproductive seemed self-evident to him. Fouché could thus assert, "It is therefore very strange indeed, that (to judge by our latest experiment -- the Native Acts of 1936), we seem to have been moving in a vicious circle, back to the Trekkers. For these Acts are the complete embodiment of the Trekker policy". This learned Afrikaner also drew upon his classical education in commenting on how contemporary South African racial policies ignorantly reflected disastrous mistakes of the past: "Such is the *ludibria rerum mortalium* [*i.e.* scoffing of mortal things]". He concluded his essay with an appeal to his readers to put aside their "foolish fear" of black South Africans: "That will be a happy day for all of us, Black and White alike; for when panic ceases, sanity returns".[64]

Another Afrikaner Challenges the Myth

Fouché's case aside, there can be little dispute that by the 1930s large numbers of Afrikaners subscribed to the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers and saw in these historical pioneers embodiments of virtues and ideals to be emulated. It should be emphasised, however, that not all other Afrikaners agreed that their forebears of a century earlier should be the objects of veneration. Some believed that the consciousness of their compatriots was riveted far too greatly on the legacy of the Great Trek and that this diverted their attention from pressing contemporary problems during an economically depressed and politically turbulent decade. These dissenters swam against the swiftly flowing current of dominant opinion and suggested that Afrikaners in general were making far too much of the centenary festivities and thereby in effect fiddling while Rome burnt.

Ironically enough, at least on the surface, one of the most prominent of such critics was Johannes Frederik Janse van Rensburg (1898-1966), a member of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* who is best known in South African history as a leader of the fascist *Ossewa-Brandwag* movement. A native of Winburg, a town in what was then the Orange Free State which had been an important point on many Voortrekkers' way north, this son of a participant in the Second Anglo-Boer War developed a childhood aversion to Anglicisation and, concomitantly, an admiration for everything military. He attended the University of Stellenbosch, where his lecturer in German, Dr E. Friedländer, inculcated in his students a love of German literature and a devotion to military virtues. Van Rensburg received a Master of Arts in Stellenbosch before qualifying in law at the University of Pretoria and returning to his undergraduate *alma mater* to take a doctorate in jurisprudence. He visited Germany during the first half of the 1930s, met Adolf Hitler and other luminaries in the National Socialist Party, and became increasingly impressed by Nazi ideology. Rather than staying in the Third Reich, however, van Rensburg returned to South Africa and at age thirty-eight was appointed Administrator of the Orange Free State. A military career had parallelled that in law and politics. Van Rensburg had joined the armed forced in 1928 and within eleven years risen from private to colonel in the Free State Sixth Brigade. In January 1941 he became the commandant-general of Ossewa-Brandwag.

Less than two years after becoming Administrator of the Orange Free State, van Rensburg was the featured speaker at festivities marking Dingaan's Day in Edenburg, a small town south-south-west of Bloemfontein. The dynamic young official set the tone of his remarks by emphasising that life implied constant change and that to remain static meant death. Van Rensburg explained

that while in some respects the South Africa of 1937 had much in common with that of 1837, in many ways it had changed dramatically and that this social evolution brought fresh demands and problems. He asked whether present-day Afrikaners were facing them effectively. "I feel at times that there are some of our leaders who hark back too often to the Voortrekkers, and too infrequently to the future", van Rensburg declared provocatively. "They focus attention to the Trek road behind us, without paying heed to the road before us. They are so attached to their forefathers that unwittingly they commit an injustice to their children". Defining the parameters of his accusation, he explained, "I am not referring so much to our political leaders as to our spiritual leaders in 'kultuur' circles throughout the length and breadth of our country". Van Rensburg called particular attention to the changing demographics of Afrikanerdom. There were then approximately 1 000 000 Afrikaans-speaking whites in the Union of South Africa and, in contrast to their geographical distribution during the nineteenth century, the majority of them were residing in urban areas. Large numbers of urbanised Afrikaners had found poorly remunerated employment in the railways and various industries. Large numbers were either unemployed or worked on only a part-time basis. These economic facts, and the social phenomenon of "poor whiteism", underscored a gaping chasm separating contemporary Afrikanerdom from the lives which independent farmers had led during the nineteenth century. Van Rensburg called for unity to face the economic crisis of the times. "Hypocrisy cannot build a nation. Let us realise that, after a century of strife, what can make us strong and cause us to triumph is the faith that we are one nation, one Fatherland and one destiny - a united nation".[65] In retrospect, the echo of the Nazi slogan "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer" in the stirring call of this future leader of the Ossewa-Brandwag is too obvious for anyone familiar with the political rhetoric of the Third Reich to overlook. The absence of any reference to ethnic groups other than Afrikaners in van Rensburg's speech (which may well be explained by the fact that he delivered it in an overwhelmingly Afrikaans town in the Orange Free State) leaves one wondering what kind of national unity he envisaged. In any case, the ambitious young politician was clearly dissatisfied with what he perceived as atavistic veneration of ancestors whose world was markedly different from that he knew with the problems which confronted him daily in his administrative capacity.

Excerpts from van Rensburg's speech appeared in *The Rand Daily Mail* the following day. The outspoken editor of that liberal newspaper, Lewis Rose Macleod, praised him for "admirably" applying to contemporary South Africa the historical lesson that "no victor can rest indefinitely upon his laurels, but that he must rise to face the very problems which are produced by his success".

This, Macleod cautioned, was "stern counsel", and those who had the moral fibre to give it "render exceptional service to their countrymen".[66]

The *Ossewa-Brandwag* as a Political Fruit of the Great Trek Centenary

The political implications of the Great Trek centenary were perhaps manifested most distinctly in the establishment of the *Ossewa-Brandwag* movement, in which van Rensburg played a formative part. This antidemocratic organisation grew out of the enthusiasm leading up to the festivities in 1938 and was officially constituted on 4 February of the following year. Encompassing almost exclusively Afrikaners, many of whom perceived themselves as descendants of the Voortrekkers, the *Ossewa-Brandwag* thrived on disaffection with the political party feuds of recent years following the coalition between the National Party and the South African Party. In its ethos and bureaucracy, it harkened back to the commando system of the nineteenth-century Boer republics. Indeed, its first commandant-general was Colonel J.C.C. Laas, a retired army officer. His successor, Dr J.F.J. van Rensburg, a member of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* who had resigned as Administrator of the Orange Free State to take this private post, also opposed the liberal democratic tenor of the times and aligned the *Ossewa-Brandwag* unofficially with fascist movements in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and other European countries. This less luminiscent star in the constellation of South African politics opposed the decision of the Jan Smuts government to enter the Second World War, a position which led to the exclusion of van Rensburg's followers from civil service posts and caused many of them, though not van Rensburg himself, to be interned during the global hostilities. The *Ossewa-Brandwag* was never banned, but within a few years after the restoration of peace in 1945 it virtually disappeared from the South African political scene.

Anglophone Critiques of the Centenary

While vast numbers of Afrikaners throughout much of the Union of South Africa were preparing to observe the centenary of the Great Trek, some of their Anglophone compatriots raised questions about the extent to which that was being done and the reasons for what seemed to them to be exaggerated celebration of a distant historical event. To some of these sceptics, the centenary had unsavoury contemporary political and psychological implications. We shall

sample critical commentaries, chiefly as published by the South African Institute of Race Relations. To be sure, this mode of selection excludes a scientific cross-section of public opinion, but it highlights one critical wing of intellectual opinion which ran counter to the dominant Afrikaner celebratory mood of that day and vividly illustrates that Stuart Cloete's critical fictional reconstruction of the Great Trek was not an isolated perception of that event.

Arthur Mervyn Keppel-Jones, an erstwhile Rhodes Scholar who eventually became a prominent liberal historian, questioned the wisdom of celebrating the Great Trek at all and thought - perhaps tongue-in-cheek - that trekking in the sense of mass emigration should be prohibited. "For what did the Trek amount to?" he asked rhetorically. "It amounted to a confession of failure -- failure of the Trekkers to accommodate themselves to the new conditions of the Colony, failure of the Government to make itself acceptable to its discontented subjects". Keppel-Jones acknowledged that the bravery of the Voortrekkers in confronting danger rather than sacrificing their political freedom was admirable. At the same time, he urged readers to "be filled with much greater admiration for a society which was capable of retaining its unity while making possible the co-operation within it of people with different opinions". Keppel-Jones did not offer examples of such a society. He did, however, underscore the inevitability of differences of opinion everywhere and declared in a classic liberal vein that "the most successful State is that which commands the loyalty of all its member even when many of them hold views extremely different from those of the people in power". Keppel-Jones identified divisiveness as an overarching contemporary problem in the Union of South Africa and pointed to the fracturing of political parties, student organisations, and trade unions as *prima facie* evidence of this trend. He further lamented the exodus of South Africans - both English-speakers and, in lesser numbers, Afrikaners - to Kenya, Rhodesia, and other colonies to flee what they regarded as an unsatisfactory government, namely that of Barry Hertzog. This migration, Keppel-Jones feared, was "of very evil augury for the future of South Africa" and militated against efforts of liberals across the racial spectrum to work for general social harmony. He proposed that the descendants of the Voortrekkers "be prepared to sacrifice some outward and circumstantial parts of the Trekker tradition" in the interest of the public good. Wholesale racial segregation of the nineteenth-century sort had become unrealistic in a rapidly industrialising South Africa in which blacks and whites had to survive in an economically symbiotic relationship. Advocates of a "conciliatory Native policy", Keppel-Jones explained, were arguing cogently that white security and freedom for all ethnic groups in the Union were not only compatible goals but actually nurtured one another. If such aims were not realised soon, he argued, South Africa might witness a much larger exodus than that of the late 1830s.[67]

An acclaimed psychologist, Ian Douglas MacCrone of the University of the Witwatersrand who had gained international recognition after the publication of his detailed study of *Race Attitudes in South Africa*,[68] sought to dissect the motives for what he perceived as the excessive identification of many Afrikaners of the 1930s with the Voortrekkers of the 1830s. The explanation, he believed, lay in obvious similarities in the situations in which large numbers of Afrikaners found themselves during those two decades, not least in terms of their fears of the black majority in their midst. The Great Trek had not really changed this underlying perceived threat to their security. Hence, "sooner or later, the same kind of situation to which the Great Trek had been the original reaction would have to be met once again". Because of this partial continuity of circumstances, "the descendants of the Trekker community, and all those who find themselves in sympathy with their ideals, are, at last, after many vicissitudes, being confronted in an even more acute form by the same situation as that which existed a century ago". MacCrone thought that "some degree of identification with the actual Voortrekkers might have been anticipated", and he thought it natural for some descendants to don early nineteenth-century Boer attire, grow beards, and in other ways express their interest in the centenary. However, in other cases "it appears that the process of identification has led to a veritable re-animation of the Voortrekker spirit and ideas as understood at the present time". Because of a fairly widespread perception of similarity in historic and contemporary situations, Afrikaners of the 1930s might accordingly be expected to evince like separatist tendencies which would drive still deeper the wedges of division between *die volk* and those whom they regarded as outside their covenant: "By a deliberate and self-conscious practice of self-selection, it is hoped once more to build up a community of the elect, limited solely to those who are prepared to subscribe to certain narrowly defined and rigidly determined articles of faith". MacCrone reserved judgment on where "this particular group ideal" nurtured "under the emotional stress of the present centenary celebration of the Great Trek" might lead.[69]

It should be emphasised that just as not all Afrikaners lent their unqualified support to the memory of the Great Trek when its centenary was being observed in 1938, not all English-speaking South Africans criticised the Voortrekkers or the way in which their descendants had chosen to honour them. One example of suck a person who, perhaps in the interest of ethnic harmony, published his respect for the emigrating Boers was the Reverend Dr A.W. Wilkie, the principal of the renowned Scottish Presbyterian mission school Lovedale at Alice in the Eastern Cape. Writing in January 1939 in *The South African Outlook*, a socially concerned religious periodical published there, he voiced his respect for the Voortrekkers as "sturdy, brave men and women, who left farms and homesteads and went out into the great unknown territories, facing all kinds

of danger and hardship with courage, hazarding their lives--in the search of freedom". Wilkie generalised broadly in suggesting that "all sections of the complex communities of South Africa" pay their respect to these "great national heroes" and their "wonderful movement". This prominent Presbyterian divine also noted the "enthusiasm everywhere shown by young and old" for the ox wagon trek that had proceeded through much of the Union and, with regard to organiser E.G. Jansen, declared that "the whole people of South Africa are indebted to him for the spirit in which he has carried through this heavy responsibility, and for his many noble utterances, including his inspiring addresses to University students, and to the youth of South Africa". The optimistic Wilkie hoped that "one of the lasting results of these celebrations in 1938 will be the creation of fuller understanding between all the races in this land".[70]

The Question of Calvinism

In addition to the obvious veneration of Voortrekker ancestors and the rôle of the heroic myth in the evolution of Afrikaner civil religion during the twentieth century, historians and other scholars have debated the part which Calvinism played in providing a motivation and justification for the Great Trek and the consequent subjugation of indigenous peoples outside the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. That this foundational Reformed theological tradition was instrumental in shaping the history of race relations in the nineteenth century has often been asserted but rarely demonstrated. In one of the many books published about the Great Trek during its centenary in 1938, J.J. van der Walt could begin an article titled "Calvinisme in Ons Volksverlede" with the blunt assertion, "Die Calvinisme het die Groot Trek gedra".[71] The so-called "Calvinist paradigm" as the underlying explanation for the conquest of dispossession of indigenes' traditional lands and the subjugation of these peoples has been a central theme in various studies during the latter half of the twentieth century. Perhaps no-one stated it more succinctly than W.A. de Klerk, who declared in his *The Puritans in Africa* that "the key to [understanding] the Afrikaners is Calvinism" and that "what bound them together, in the deepest sense, was the Calvinist ethic". This Afrikaans intellectual and journalist proceeded in general terms to describe at length European Calvinism and traced a line through its manifestation in the Cape through *inter alia* the Great Trek and the Voortrekker legacy to apartheid.[72] James Michener argued much the same point in his immensely popular novel of 1980, *The Covenant*,[73] and this theme is prominent in T. Dunbar Moodie's influential study of *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*.[74]

Perhaps nowhere was the religious - though not specifically Calvinist - impetus more succinctly stated than in Eric Anderson Walker's standard history of the Great Trek, which was initially published in 1934. That distinguished professor at the University of Cape Town sought in his third chapter to explain "The Causes of the Great Trek". His opening lines reveal his fundamental attitude towards the relationship between religious identity and this migration, especially the racial ramifications of the latter. "The frontier Boers of the eighteen-thirties (and the frontier covered four-fifths of the area of the entire Cape Colony) were a scripturally minded folk", Walker asserted. "Even if the Bible had not been to many of them in the most literal sense The Book, the only book, they must have been drawn towards it, and towards the Old Testament in especial, because there was told the story of a pastoral, semi-nomadic people very like themselves". The prospective Voortrekkers were "pastoralists" who could identify with "those ancient trekkers who had plagued Rameses III" in Exodus.[75] On what he based this speculation is not fully clear. In any case, Walker believed the Boers in question perceived their place in the racial pluralism of the Southern Cape as a reflection of what they read in the Old Testament: "As for the Bushmen and presently the Bantu, they were heathen, and according to the frontier reading of Holy Scripture it was the Christian meek who were to inherit the earth. Nay, more, there were frontiersmen who said openly that African natives were children of Ham and might therefore be treated if necessary as men hated of God". [76]

Was specifically Calvinism a factor in launching the Great Trek? According to this general historical explanation of collective religious identity and causation, an early or "primitive" form of Calvinism accompanied seventeenth and eighteenth-century European immigrants to the Cape, where the relative isolation of these people, especially in rural areas, allowed it to survive generally intact for well over a century. Neither the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, or the transformation of the Reformed tradition in Europe made a significant impact on the religious beliefs and practices of the early settlers at the Cape. As self-aware Christian bearers of civilisation who regarded the indigenous African peoples in their midst as heathens and savages obviously outside a covenantal relationship with God, Calvinists from the Netherlands, France, and Germany gradually began not merely to regard predestination or election as an individual matter but an ethnic issue; they themselves were, generally speaking, the chosen of God, while the Africans were the non-elect. As the late historian Professor Maurice Boucher of the University of South Africa put it, "The idea of a personal call by God, which was a significant part of the isolated farmer's religious convictions, was becoming a national call".[77] This perceived or assumed transformation, it should be emphasised, was itself a departure from the doctrines of the magisterial

Genevan Reformer John Calvin in the direction of a synthesis of Christianity and ethnocentrism. Moreover, their devotion to the Bible, which in many homes included daily reading of the Scriptures, led *trekboers* near the frontier of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope to identify with the nomadic Israelites of the Old Testament; concomitantly, they regarded the indigenous Africans in their midst as a reflection of the Canaanites or victims of the curse of Ham. Their own self-perceived divine mission was variously to propagate Christianity, carry civilisation as they understood it to the indigenes, impose peace on factious tribes, and preserve themselves as a *volk* chosen by God to execute His plans for Southern Africa.

In what is widely regarded as one of the most significant essays in South African historiography, Professor André du Toit of the University of Cape Town challenged this Calvinist paradigm as a key factor in the unfolding of race relations in the nineteenth century. He argued cogently that until approximately the middle of that century there is very scant evidence of such group self-identification as a New Israel (in striking contrast to a prevalent theme in the ideational history of Puritan New England, for example) or in the curse of Ham as a justification for subjugating Khoisan or other African peoples. Du Toit did not seek to absolve his Afrikaans forebears of their racism and expansionist exploitation of indigenous peoples. He emphasised, however, that in fact there was far more extant evidence of British missionary motivation for such imperialism than one could trace to Afrikaans sources. Such men as John Philip and David Livingstone repeatedly offered theological justifications for linking the growth of the British Empire, the intrusion of European civilisation in Africa, and the expansion of commerce there with the propagation of the Gospel. In some cases, especially Livingstone faulted the Voortrekkers for impeding this multiple scheme.[78]

Indeed, du Toit argued that the internationally influential Livingstone was the real fountainhead of the Calvinist paradigm which subsequently gained currency as the normative explanation of the Voortrekkers' imposition of their power over the African peoples amongst whom they settled during the middle third of the nineteenth century. This interpretation came to the fore during controversies which the intrepid Scotsman was having with Afrikaners in the Transvaal and with the Dutch Reformed Church. That institution, Livingstone contended, provided the Calvinist theological justification for the Voortrekkers' belief in racial inequality, their expropriation of Africans' lands, and other racist misdeeds. He also accused the followers of Andries Potgieter, the renowned Voortrekker leader who helped to lead part of the Great Trek to the Northern Transvaal, of regarding themselves as a chosen people entering Canaan and their leader as a second Moses. This last-mentioned belief, as we shall see in our consideration of Stuart Cloete's

Turning Wheels in Chapter IX, would resonate in that fictional work. Owing to Livingstone's reputation in Britain and elsewhere, his published interpretations of the religious factor in Southern African history became virtually normative and were eventually appropriated by the descendants of the Voortrekkers as part of their myth of the Great Trek.[79]

Eric Anderson Walker's Ambivalence on Voortrekker Motives

Because the eminent historian Eric Anderson Walker of the University of Cape Town appears to have influenced both Stuart Cloete and Francis Brett Young through his standard history of *The Great Trek*, it is essential that we consider the general presentation of Voortrekker motives in that work. Walker apparently sought to navigate a *via media* between the nearly hagiographic representations of the Voortrekkers that Preller and many others had created earlier in the twentieth century and the vilifying attitudes that still existed in some Anglophone quarters. Beyond the strong Calvinist impetus which Walker perceived among these migrants, he found an amalgam of motives with which he could sympathise and others of less laudatory stature. Some of the emigrating farmers were victims of circumstance, while others used circumstances to justify their own ambitions. Admitting that the Voortrekkers were an imperfect lot, he declared, "But when every allowance has been made, the fact remains that unwilling Trekkers felt that the exodus had been forced on them by an unsympathetic government, and the willing found a natural satisfaction in blaming the authorities for making them do what desire and perhaps ambition prompted them to do". Nevertheless, on balance Walker portrayed the Voortrekkers as victims of British maladministration. He catalogued such grievances as the denial of due process of law at Slagtersnek, the inability or unwillingness of the colonial government to protect settlers in the Eastern Cape from attacks by indigenes, and the abolition of slavery, all of which such leaders as Piet Retief had mentioned during the 1830s. Indeed, Walker seems to have regarded that eminent Voortrekker as essentially an oracle: "Much of the subsequent history of southern Africa has been a commentary on Piet Retief's manifesto".[80] As we shall see, especially Francis Brett Young expressed in fiction a corresponding spectrum of grievances and motives for the trek, whereas Stuart Cloete did not.

A Concluding Afrikaner Challenge to the Heroic Myth

During the socially turbulent 1950s, as the ruling National Party continued to implement gradually its policy of apartheid, a critical Afrikaans intellectual rejected the prevailing image of the Voortrekkers in a way reminiscent of the challenges of men like Leo Fouché in the 1930s. The rhetorical volley which Professor P.V. Pistorius, a specialist in Hellenistic and Patristic Greek at the University of Pretoria, fired across the bow of the dominant stereotype of the Voortrekkers provides us with a fitting capstone for our historical survey of the unfolding of this myth.

In his brief volume of 1957, *No Further Trek*, this diminutive scholar, who was frequently a pebble in the shoe of Afrikanerdom, postulated that the principal problem of humanity lay in the difficulty of establishing and maintaining harmonious interpersonal and intergroup relations. Historically, "a policy of evasion" had been normative; rather than persevere in attempts to resolve tensions, individuals and tribes typically had simply moved. This was particularly the case, and even feasible, for many centuries: "The world was new and wide[,] and the problem invited postponement. . . . And what could be easier than solving the problem of human relations and of living together than merely by not living together?" Pistorius then interpreted the Great Trek in terms of the "policy of evasion":

> In South Africa, as no doubt in all other new countries, we hear much of our independent pioneer ancestors, men of simple faith and freedom-loving spirit who, in their bravery, did not hesitate to face the dangers of a wild and new country. But we forget that most probably they faced these dangers because of their inability to face the problems of human relations. Our very insistence on their love of freedom should have warned us that possibly they loved freedom because they found self-discipline too difficult. . . . Nevertheless they had failed. . . . Either they or the powers in authority or both, had failed to solve a problem of living together.

Pistorius applied the lesson of history to the contemporary social morass in the Union. Obliquely attacking the policy of separate development of its racial groups, he pointed out that in his fragmented society "there are Europeans and Bantu and Coloureds and Indians. There are the English and the Afrikaners, as they call themselves. [But] there are no, or at least very few, South Africans". Lamenting that "South Africa is allergic to ideological changes", he argued that ethnic

pluralism was not a curse but "an act of God" which had to be addressed. Pistorius closed his brief volume with an obvious allusion to the final line of what was then the national anthem, *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*: "We must choose between the call of South Africa and the call of the group".[81]

Notes

1. This statement reflects disagreement with A.L. Harington's confident assertions in his commendable study of *The Graham's Town Journal* during this period. With regard to Robert Godlonton, the editor of that newspaper, then the only one in the district, Harington in the late 1960s thought himself "justified in equating the meaning and significance of what appeared to be happening as far as the [1820] Settlers were concerned with what appeared in the pages of the *Journal* for the simple reason that its influence in Albany, among the Settlers, was so enormous, far greater than that exercised by any modern South African newspaper". Further, "He [*i.e.* Godlonton] was the Settlers' champion, and the Settlers knew it; as they appreciated his defence of them on the frontier, where all that he wrote was an extension and articulation of their own experiences, opinions and resentments, so they must have accepted what he wrote concerning the great emigration of their Boer fellow colonists into the interior." See A.L. Harington, *The Graham's Town Journal and The Great Trek, 1834-1843* in *Archives Year Book for South African History*. 32nd Year, Vol. II (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1973), pp. 5-6. There is simply no logical necessity for readers to have agreed with Godlonton's published opinions. Harington's generalisations defy empirical verification.

2. Untitled editorial, *The Graham's Town Journal*, 2 June 1836, [p. 2].

3. Untitled editorial, *The Graham's Town Journal*, 11 August 1836, [p. 2].

4. Untitled editorial, *The South African Commercial Advertiser* (Cape Town), 4 May 1836, [p. 2].

5. "Migration" (editorial), *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 27 August 1836, [p. 2].

6. "Emigration" (editorial), *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 5 August 1837, [p. 2].

7. Untitled editorial, *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 4 November 1837, [p. 2].

8. Untitled editorial, *The Graham's Town Journal*, 16 November 1837, [p. 2].

9. "Die Uitgewekenen" (editorial), *De Zuid-Afrikaan* (Cape Town), 11 August 1837, [p. 5].

10. See, for example, "Emigratie der Boeren.--Immigratie uit Groot-Brittanje." (editorial), *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 18 August 1837, p. 3.

11. Henry Cloete, *Five Lectures on the Emigration of the Dutch Farmers from the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, and Their Settlement in the District of Natal, until Their Formal Submission to Her Majesty's Authority, in the Year 1843* (Cape Town: Saul Solomon & Co., 1856), i-ii.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-38.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-50.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

19. F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Die Beeld van die Groot Trek in die Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing 1843-1899* (Pretoria: Mededelings van die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, C42, 1963), pp. 80-81.

20. George McCall Theal, *Compendium of the History and Geography of South Africa*. 3rd ed. revised (London: Edward Stanford, 1878), pp. 224, 228-230.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

23. George McCall Theal, *History of the Boers in South Africa* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1887), vi, ix.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 66.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61, 70.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

27. John Tudhope, *The Voortrekkers of South Africa* (Durban: P. Davis and Sons, 1891), Preface (unpaginated).

28. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

29. *Ibid.*, 30-33.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

31. F.A. van Jaarsveld, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History* (Cape Town: Simondium Publishers, 1964), p. 78.

32. Isabel Hofmeyr, "Popularising History: The Case of Gustav Preller", in Stephen Clingman (ed.), *Regions and Repertoires: Topics in South African Politics and Culture* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1991), pp. 63-69.

33. A.J. Antonites, "Preller, Gustav Schoeman", in *Dictionary of South African Biography*, I (Pretoria: National Council for Social Research, 1968), p. 647.

34. Hofmeyr, "Popularising History: The Case of Gustav Preller", p. 80.

35. B.J. Liebenberg, "Preller as historikus", *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, XV, no. 4 (December 1975), p. 250.

36. Hofmeyr, "Popularising History: The Case of Gustav Preller", p. 72.

37. Edwin Hees, "The Voortrekkers on Film: From Preller to Pornography", *Critical Arts*, X, no. 1 (1996), p. 8.

38. P.J.J. Prinsloo, "Die Oorsprong van die Ideaal om 'n Monument ter Ere van die Voortrekkers op te Rig", *Historia*, XLI, no. 1 (May 1996), pp. 62-73.

39. Elizabeth Delmont, "The Voortrekker Monument: Monolith to Myth", *South African Historical Journal*, no. 29 (November 1993), p. 78.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-88.

42. "Girls Smoke and Wear Shorts: Boys Slovenly", *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 December 1937, p. 17.

43. "True Afrikaner Spirit Lacking", *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 December 1937, p. 17.

44. "Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Trek van 1938", *Gedenkboek. Voortrekker-Eeufees 1838-1939* (n.p., n.publ., n.d), pp. 34-37.

45. "To-day's Historic Event", *Cape Times* (Cape Town), 8 August 1938, p. 15; "Aanvang van 'n Grootse Afrikaner-Onderneming", *Die Burger* (Cape Town), 8 August 1938, p. 2.

46. "Trek Camp Fires at Goodwood", *Cape Times*, 9 August 1938, p. 13; "Tienduisende Roep die Trek Vaarwel Toe", *Die Burger*, 9 August 1938, p. 1.

47. "Second Stage of New Great Trek", *Cape Times*, 10 August 1938, p. 13; "Stellenbosch Hou 'n Model-Fees", *Die Burger*, 10 August 1938, p. 1; "Ossewa se Plek in Volk. Prof. Pienaar se Treffende Toespraak", *Die Burger*, 10 August 1938, pp. 1-2.

48. "Today's Historic Event", *Cape Times*, 8 August 1938, p. 15.

49. Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1979), pp. 98-101.

50. Alan Paton, *Towards the Mountain* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), pp. 208-209.

51. J.M.H. Viljoen, "Stigters van die Boernasie", *Die Huisgenoot*, XXI, no. 768 (11 December 1936), p. 17.

52. Leo Fouché, "Die Karakter van die Voortrekkers", *Die Groot Trek. Gedenkuitgawe. Die Huisgenoot* (December 1938), pp. 51-53.

53. J.D. Kestell, "Die Hand van God in Ons Geskiedenis", *Die Kerkbode*, XLII, no. 21 (23 November 1938), pp. 917-918.

54. This clerical commentator was also an amateur historian who had written a brief, popular history of the Great Trek; see J.D. Kestell, *Die Voortrekkers. 'n Kort Geskiedverhaal.* 3rd edition

(Pretoria: J.H. de Bussy, 1926).

55. S.H. Rossouw, "Die Pad van Suid-Afrika", *Die Kerkbode*, XLII, no. 21 (23 November 1938), pp. 933-935. See C. Venter, "Die Voortrekkers en die ingeboekte slawe wat die Groot Trek meegemaak het, 1835-1838", *Historia*, XXXVI, no. 1 (May 1991), pp. 14-29.

56. A.P. Smit, "Sarel Cilliers as Volksman en Godsman", *Die Kerkbode*, XLII, no. 23 (7 December 1938), pp. 1035-1036, XLII, no. 24 (14 December 1938), pp. 1078-1080, and XLII, no. 25 (21 December 1938), pp. 1111-1112.

57. D.R. Snyman, "Sedelike Gevare", *Die Kerkbode*, XLII, no. 24 (14 December 1938), p. 1066.

58. "Aan allen, die ons volk liefhebben" (editorial), *De Burger* (Cape Town), 26 July 1915, p. 4.

59. S.W. Pienaar (ed.), *Glo in U volk. Dr. D.F. Malan as Redenaar 1908-1954* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1964), pp. 110-120.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-128.

61. F.A. Mouton, "Professor Leo Fouché, the History Department and the Afrikanerization of the University of Pretoria", *Historia*, XXXVIII, no. 1 (May 1993), p. 53; M. Arkin and F.A. van Jaarsveld, "Fouché, Leo", *Dictionary of South African Biography*, V (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1987), pp. 274-275.

62. Mouton, "Professor Leo Fouché, the History Department and the Afrikanerization of the University of Pretoria", pp. 54-55.

63. Leo Fouché, "The Historical Setting of the Great Trek", *Race Relations*, V, no. 4 (November 1938), pp. 71-72.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

65. "Afrikaner Leaders 'Hark Back Too Often' - O.F.S. Administrator", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 18 December 1937, p. 16.

66. "The Promise of the Past", *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 December 1937, p. 12.

67. A.M. Keppel-Jones, "The Trek Tradition and Modern Problems", *Race Relations*, V, no. 4 (November 1938), pp. 79-81.

68. I.D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa. Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

69. I.D. MacCrone, "The Great Trek and Its Centenary Celebration in the Light of Group Psychology", *Race Relations*, V, no. 4 (November 1938), pp. 81-84.

70. A.W. Wilkie, "The Voortrekkers", *The South African Outlook*, LXIX, no. 813 (2 January 1939), pp. 20-21.

71. J.J. van der Walt, "Calvinisme in Ons Volksverlede", *Gedenkboek. Voortrekker-Eeufees 1838-1938* (n.p.: n.publ., n.d.), p. 68.

72. W.A. de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa. A Story of Afrikanerdom* (London: Rex Collings, 1975), xiv, p. 12.

73. James A. Michener, *The Covenant* (New York: Random House, 1980).

74. T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

75. Walker was by no means a Biblical scholar, and his reference to this pharaoh indicates a gap in his knowledge. Much archaeological evidence suggests that Moses obtained the released of the Israelites from Rameses II (not Rameses III, as Walker asserted), who ruled Egypt from ca. 1290 until ca. 1223 B.C. It is now widely accepted that the Israelite invasion of Canaan took place during the fourth quarter of the thirteenth century B.C.

76. Eric Anderson Walker, *The Great Trek* (London: A. & C. Black Ltd, 1934), pp. 59, 64.

77. Quoted in André du Toit, "No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology", *The American Historical Review*, LXXXVIII, no. 4 (October 1983), p. 925.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 937-941.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 945-951.

80. Walker, *The Great Trek*, p. 105.

81. P.V. Pistorius, *No Further Trek* (n.p.: Central News Agency, 1957), pp. 1-5, 82-84.

Chapter III

The Heroic Motif in Early Dutch and Afrikaans Novels about the Great Trek

It must be emphasised that the novels in English which we shall analyse were published not only against the backdrop of long-standing but still evolving rhetorical traditions about the Great Trek in both English and Afrikaans nonfictional historical works but also had antecedents in Dutch and Afrikaans fiction which probably contributed to shaping many Afrikaners' attitudes towards their Voortrekker forebears. An awareness of central themes of the works that were written in these latter languages and read by many descendants of the Voortrekkers augments our understanding of the reception of and particularly the hostility to Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* and Cloete's *Turning Wheels* in Afrikaans circles in 1932 and 1937, respectively. A consideration of these antecedent fictional depictions of the Voortrekkers is thus crucial to the historical context of the present study.

The Great Trek of the 1830s and early 1840s not only changed the fundamental demography of Southern Africa and provided much of the foundation for Afrikaner nationalism but also triggered the imaginations of writers who sought to reconstruct it through literary works in several genres. Beginning late in the nineteenth century, *i.e. before* Afrikaners sought to recover from the conquest of the two Boer republics in the Second War of Independence (which is generally regarded as a key event which prompted Gustav Preller and other nationalists to create what would soon become the prevailing image of the Voortrekkers), Afrikaners and Dutchmen took steps towards developing in fiction the heroic portrayal of these early pioneers. This heroic motif had begun to unfold in such Netherlandic and South African Dutch fictional representations of the Great Trek as J. Hendrik van Balen's *De Landverhuizers* (1887), Johan Frederik van Oordt's *David Malan* (1896) and J.D. Kestell's and Nico Hofmeyr's *De Vortrekkers of Het Dagboek van Izak van der Merwe* (1898), all of which merit independent analysis. After the turn of the century, the development of the heroic motif made a perceptible impact on children's literature written for young readers in Afrikaans. In harmony with the overarching scope of the present study, in this chapter I shall examine the characterisation of Voortrekkers and the Great Trek generally in these three nineteenth-century works, then turn to three from the twentieth century, namely Maria Elizabeth Rothmann's *Kinders van die Voortrek*,[1] which was initially published in 1920 and reprinted in 1933, Pieter van der Merwe

Erasmus's *Twee Voortrekkertjies*,[2] which rolled from the presses in 1935, and Anna de Villiers's *Die Wit Kraai*, whose publication coincided with the Voortrekker centenary in 1938.

None of these books has yet received the full critical attention it deserves, although in articles I have analysed the heroic motif in those by Van Balen, Erasmus, Rothmann, and De Villiers.[3] The three novels in Dutch appear to have escaped previous scholarly dissection entirely, and no-one has yet published a detailed consideration of most aspects of *Twee Voortrekkertjies*. This work receives only the sketchiest treatment in Andree-Jeanne Tötemeyer's survey of racism in Afrikaans children's literature, where not even its date of publication is given correctly.[4]

J. Hendrik van Balen's *De Landverhuizers*

It is conceivable that the first book-length fictional reconstruction of the Voortrekkers in any language was *De Landverhuizers*, which the otherwise unknown Dutch writer J. Hendrik van Balen published in 1887. A comparison of his text with that of Frans Lion Cachet's *De Worstelstrijd der Transvalers*, which appeared five years earlier and which we considered briefly in Chapter II, reveals Van Balen's great (though unacknowledged) reliance on that work, a matter which I have demonstrated elsewhere.[5] Furthermore, this novel has little to commend it in terms of artistic merit. Nevertheless, it is of interest in terms of literary history, particularly with regard to the present study, because in it Van Balen incorporated several elements which reverberated in subsequent Dutch and Afrikaans historical fiction about the Great Trek, such as the use of a romantic sub-plot which accompanies the principal epic story line, derogatory representations of the indigenous African characters, a catalogue of grievances about British colonial rule as factors prompting the Boer emigration, and a heroic representation of the Voortrekkers. The present discussion will focus on the last-named attribute.

Given his apparent dearth of first-hand acquaintance with most of the ethnic groups in Southern Africa, Van Balen judiciously refrained from attempting to describe their physical characteristics. His Dutch *personae* are the sole exception, and his characterisation of them provides part of the foundation for their heroic depiction. Van Balen emphasises the masculinity of the males. Protagonist Hendrik Bottenberg is "een breed geschouderde jonge man, die het type van den Hollandschen boer vertoonde" (p. 2), while his uncle is "een reus van een man met breede schouders en groote stevige handen". The elder Bottenberg,

moreover, provides an archetype for subsequent portrayals of senior male Voortrekkers: "Zijn grijzende blonde baard hing hem over de borst, en in zijn door weer en wind gebruind gelaat, flikkerde een paar schrandere kleine grijze oogen" (p. 37). Yet this hulking man is also sensitive and weeps unashamedly at the grave of his deceased wife and gathers apple seeds from a nearby tree immediately before riding away from Zilverfontein, intending to sow them at his new home in Natal (pp. 50-51). After the Battle of Vechtkop, Van Balen summarises Hendrik's other admirable traits as perceived by his fellow emigrants. "Hendrik zelf was in aller achting geklommen, sedert men had ontdekt, dat de kenmerkende oud-Hollandsche eigenschappen in ruime mate zijn deel waren", he declares with no mean flattery to readers in The Netherlands. "Zijn dapperheid en tevens kalme voorsichtigheid hadden aller goedkeuring weggedragen, zoo zelfs, dat Sarel Cilliers hem na afloop van het gevecht evenals den overigen boeren hartelijk de hand had gedrukt en getuigd had, dat hij getoond had, een Hollandsche jongen te zijn van den echten stempel, een jongen van Jan de Witt" (p. 99).

As individuals, most of the other male Voortrekkers remain tenebrous, at least compared to Hendrik. As a group, however, they emerge as a courageous lot; Van Balen declares that "het waren allen mannen van ijzer en staal" who sally forth with Cilliers to negotiate peace with Moselekatse (p. 89). Most of the men do little more than fight indigenous Africans. In that undertaking they almost invariably excel, and it is in the arena of interracial combat that they prove their mettle. Van Balen cannot resist praising their marksmanship repeatedly. At times this adroitness with firearms is heroic; in the first occurrence Hendrik's uncle saves his life by shooting a wildebeest that is about to gore him (p. 64). Later the senior Bottenberg kills an elephant with one shot (p. 80). The young Dutchman is apparently no less gifted with a rifle; he and his mates gun down fourteen blesboks in rapid succession (p. 71), and subsequently no fewer than fifty-four impalas fall victim to their implausibly impeccable marksmanship on horseback (p. 108). But it is in their armed encounters with indigenous Africans that the Voortrekkers' skill with their rifles proves their worthiness in the art of drawing blood. Outnumbered 100 to 1 at Vechtkop, they nevertheless thereby emerge victorious. "Onophoudelijk zonden zij hun nimmer missende kogels op de drommen vijanden af", declares Van Balen (p. 93). In a subsequent battle, he points out, the minor character Hans Rensburg fells a "Kaffer" from a distance of 200 paces with one shot (p. 181). And at Blood River the Voortrekkers' exemplary marksmanship is directly juxtaposed with the ineptness of the Zulus: "Kogels en assagaaien vlogen oven en door de wagens; want de Kaffers gebruikten

de buit gemaakte geweren, maar hunne kogels troffen geen doel, terwijl de kogels der boeren steeds raak waren" (pp. 203-204).

To a very circumscribed degree the men of the Great Trek evince other characteristics which underscore both their heroism and the moral justifiability of their migration. Having established in early dialogue that the British colonial administration of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope was oppressive, Van Balen emphasises that the Voortrekkers governed themselves democratically, beginning with the selection of their commanders by popular (male) vote (p. 54). Their governance, in contrast to the bungling of the British administrators, is successful; the Voortrekker leaders enact equitable rules for the emigrants and fairly distribute responsibilities on them. The results are, according to Van Balen, quite splendid and offer a model for community life in the subsequently settled areas: "Op deze wijze georganiseerd, ging het goed, en de toestand werd hoe langer hoe beter. Er waren zeer weinig zieken; 's morgens en 's aftens werd er godsdienstoefening gehouden, en verder geschiedden alle noodige bezigheden zóó geregeld en zóó goed, alsof men nog in de Kaapkolonie op de boerderij was" (p. 125).

Van Balen describes at length the arduous crossing of the Drakensberg with ox wagons and identifies this feat as the emblematic event which stamps the Voortrekkers as heroes. It was, he asserts without reserve, "een tocht, die in de geschiedboeken van Zuid-Afrika geboekt staat met gouden letters, als een bewijs, wat de energie, de moed en de volharding der landverhuizers vermochten" (p. 154). That said, it seems evident that Van Balen found the lion's share of Voortrekker heroism displayed in combat with Africans, not in the struggle up precipitous terrain. In one encounter near Bushman River, for instance, the arrival of a trio of male Boers at an embattled wagon train changes the tide of the struggle, for "het was alsof de verschijning van die helden allen met nieuwen moed bezielde"and "de heldenmoed van die drie mannen" inspired the seemingly hopelessly outnumbered emigrants to fight on to victory (p. 173). Despite his emphasis on group heroism, in a few places Van Balen singles out individuals for their valour. At the just mentioned battle, to adduce one such case, he cites the bravery of Sarel Cilliers: "Als een brieschende leeuw had deze held zich onder de vijanden bewogen, nu hier, dan daar hulp brengende" (p. 175). This zoological metaphor stands in sharp contrast to the negative connotations of those he applies to fighting Africans.

Although *De Landverhuizers* is an emphatically male reconstruction of the Great Trek in which female characters are relegated to decidedly minor rôles, Van Balen appears to have

launched the tradition of recognising in fiction the part which women played in prodding the Voortrekkers in general to press ahead despite great hardship and violent resistance by the Zulus. Not long before the decisive Battle of Blood River, many of the Voortrekkers who have already traversed the Drakensberg despair of ever securing permanent homes in Natal, and some consider following suggestions by the governor of the Cape Colony to turn back, "doch de vrouwen der boeren wilden dat niet". In their grief the womenfolk evince both exemplary courage and a spirit of vindictiveness: "Zij eischten van de manne wraak voor hunne vermoorde echtgenooten en kinderen, broeders en zusters, éér dat geschied was, wilden zij geen stap teruggaan" (p. 192).

Johan Frederik van Oordt's *David Malan*

Less than a decade later a few writers of Dutch in southern Africa began to publish fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek. The first of these, *David Malan*, became in 1896 the fifth volume in the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Historie-Bibliotheek*, an ambitious undertaking of the 1890s and the first few years of the twentieth century which aimed to impart to young Afrikaners a knowledge of their ethnic history through quasi-fictitious literature. Issued by the Hollandsch-Afrikaansche Uitgevevers-Maatschappij in co-operation with Jacques Dusseau & Co. of Amsterdam and Cape Town, the initial series encompassed a dozen volumes written by Johan Frederik van Oordt (1856-1918), who was born in the Mother City after his scholarly father, Jan Willem Gerbrand van Oordt (1826-1904), a classicist and historian who had taken his doctorate at the University of Leiden, and mother had emigrated to the Cape. The younger Van Oordt accompanied his parents to The Netherlands in 1858, however, and was educated there until his father returned to Cape Town in 1873 to become the editor of *Het Volksblad*. In this capacity, and subsequently as editor of *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, he vigorously defended Afrikaners against attacks on their ethnicity in the Cape English press.[6] J.F. van Oordt began his career as a teacher and subsequently worked as a lawyer. By 1890 he had begun to write seriously for publication, chiefly in periodicals in the Cape. When the editors of the projected series of Dutch-language books offered him a contract to write them for the then quite handsome sum of £60 per volume, he accepted and undertook the task with apparently great vigour and the published works of George McCall Theal at arm's reach. Rather than using his own name,

Van Oordt wrote under the pseudonym "D'Arbez", a variant of his childhood nickname "Zebra".

In form and purpose, as Dr Siegfried Huigen has pointed out in his introduction to Van Oordt's works, they remained remarkably consistent. In brief, they are on one level derivative capsule histories of episodes in the history of the Afrikaners during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Yet, like *De Landverhuizers*, each volume also encompasses a fictitious subplot, undoubtedly included to help retain readers' interest in the larger historical lesson. In most instances, this stratum consists of a formula romance in which a young Afrikaans man and woman fall in love, their romantic relationship endures through a crisis, and they eventually wed. This subplot, as Huigen has indicated, "was meestal opgebouwd uit de elemented van de avonturenrooman: liefde, oorlog, schipbreuk en het pioniersleven".[7] Van Oordt's works are thus a hybrid of historical fiction and formula romance.

Such is emphatically the case in *David Malan*. The tale is told by an omniscient narrator from a conventional third-person point of view and spans 180 relatively short pages accompanied by a few illustrations. Its general plot unfolds in 1837 and 1838 in the context of the Great Trek. In what would become the Orange Free State, Voortrekker leaders reluctantly overcome their personal rivalries, and, apart from the headstrong Hendrik Potgieter, elect to cross the Drakensberg into the kingdom of Dingaan. After arduously doing so, their commander, Piet Retief, accompanied by various other Boers and their servants, reach the kraal of that Zulu monarch. He receives these visitors but insists that he will cede land to them only if they recover some 700 head of cattle which Sikonyella has stolen from him. Retief's clever Boers succeed in luring that headman to their camp, where they arrest him and free him only after extracting from him a promise to return the abducted livestock. A select group of these Voortrekkers, accompanied by sympathetic Englishmen whom they have befriended in Port Natal (subsequently Durban), triumphantly herd the recovered cattle back to the royal kraal where, however, Dingaan orders the Voortrekkers put to death. Van Oordt describes all of this in considerable detail, often creating dialogue to supplement general facts he has gleaned from published histories. He also relates how another Boer commando under the leadership of Pieter Uys attempts a punitive raid on the Zulus but is lured into a canyon and decimated. Near the end of his narrative, Van Oordt refers only obliquely to the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838. *David Malan* does not deal with the settlement of the Voortrekkers in Natal as such. That would await another volume in the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Historie-Bibliotheek.*

In the embedded romantic subplot, two young Afrikaners, David Malan and Martje Joubert, who have been neighbours in the Winterberg area of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope and accompany their parents on the Great Trek, become involved with each other and plan to wed. Malan desires to accompany Retief to the royal kraal, but his distressed fiancée, aided by a Coloured maid, thwarts this plan by using a concoction to make him sick on the day of his planned departure. This bit of hackneyed intrigue saves Malan's life. He and Martje, together with several other betrothed couples, are subsequently united in wedlock by an American Presbyterian missionary, Daniel Lindley (1801-1880), a relatively well-known figure in the annals of South African missions whom the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions commissioned to evangelise the Zulus and who, *en route* to Zululand, gained a rudimentary knowledge of Dutch and ministered briefly to the Voortrekkers. Martje cannot prevent her husband from joining the ill-fated commando of Piet Uys, on which he, together with his father and brother, succumb to Zulu assegais. When news of David's demise reaches Martje, she collapses in horror and lives the rest of her life mentally deranged. On her deathbed a half-century later, she dies calling to her late husband, thereby echoing by analogy his final words before expiring on the battlefield. Thus ends *David Malan.*

Much could be written about the place of Van Oordt's novel about the Great Trek in the unfolding of the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers, but we shall limit our discussion of it to a few of the most salient points. First, there is an explicit emphasis on the heroism of the Voortrekkers. Van Oordt praises them in general and especially some of their leaders as exemplary historical characters. That these emigrants are a hard-working lot is repeatedly emphasised as Van Oordt describes them pushing their wagons over the Drakensberg, guarding their livestock from nocturnal predators, and performing other arduous tasks. Young Malan, whom Van Oordt twice calls "onze held" (pp. 124, 148), shares this penchant for hard work. Accordingly, he is an early riser, "want zooals alle Afrikaansche Boeren, was David een vijand van het in bed liggen" (p. 108). Moreover, the Voortrekkers are harbingers of South African democracy. Van Oordt sees in the governance of the Great Trek ample evidence of the saying that "Het volk is koning": "Geen belangrijk besluid werd genomen zonder dat men het volk raadpleegde, en elke man, van 18 jaar en daarboven, had een stem in de Volksvergadering" (p. 50). This perception, of course, is ethnocentric and gender exclusive; no more than most other male Europeans whose political and social views were rooted in the nineteenth century did Van Oordt assume that people not of European descent should wield

any political power over them.

Bravery is an essential component of Voortrekker heroism in *David Malan*. Van Oordt emphasises how the emigrants overcome seemingly overwhelming odds in defeating the massive Zulu armies, especially when these foes attack the wagons and Boer valour is linked to family solidarity. "Doch de Boeren weerden zich dapper", he asserts; "de gedachte aan de vrouwen en kinderen gaf hun heldenmoed" (p. 124). It is also united with Christian faith and an identification with the Israelites of Hebrew Scripture. Repeatedly before going into battle and when they emerge victorious, the Voortrekkers pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Zoo vochten die oude Voortrekkers", summarises Van Oordt; "gedurende den strijd weerden zij zich als leeuwen; na den strijd was hun eerste gedachte om den Heer de glorie te geven van de overwinning" (p. 126).

Van Oordt was also one of the creators of the heroic image of female Voortrekkers. Martje is the focal point of his praise, not least when she saves her husband's life by shooting a Zulu who is about to stab him with an *assegai*. To Van Oordt, her courage stems not simply from being a generic Afrikaner but from her lineage within that group. Martje can encourage David to accompany Uys as his adjutant on his punitive expedition; "het Fransche heldenbloed had bewezen dat het nog in de aderen der Jouberts vloeide . . ." (p. 150). The repeatedly intrusive narrator declares to readers that "onze geschideenis is vol van heldinnen; in Bezuidenhouts vrouw, ten tijde van Slachtersnek, vindt gij er eene, de strervende vrouw van Andries Wessel Pretorius, die haar man aanspoorde zijn plicht voor zijn land te doon, en haar te verlaten, is eene anderen; en in die Transvaalschen Vrijheidsoorlog van 1880 waren er vrouwen wier gedrag niet minder heldaftig was". To Van Oordt, the valour of the female gender guaranteed the future of Afrikanerdom: "Zoolang het jonge geschlacht zulke moeders heeft, is oer geen vrees dat de Afrikaner natie geheel zal ontaarden" (p. 151).

Van Oordt places some emphasis on individual male Voortrekkers as exemplars of heroism. At the apex of his pantheon in this respect is Charel Cilliers, whom he describes in virtually hagiographic terms:

> Geen dapperder man vindt ge in het geheele kamp der Boeren maar tevens ook geen grooter Christen. Is er te vechten dan is Oom Charel de eerste; is eer te bidden, of is eer een voorganger noodig voor het houden van den godsdienst op Zondag, dan is het Oom Charel, die in den naam van allen den

> Almachtigen God om Diens zegen smeekt. Een voorbeeldig man in alle opzichten; een man voor wien elkeen, ja zelfs elk kind den grootsten eerbied koestert (p. 16).

Piet Uys, moreover, is a praiseworthy and intrepid individual whose leadership in the Great Trek comes naturally, given his experience in dealing with ethnic enemies. "Deze had in den Kafferoorlog van 1834 aan de zijde van Retief gestreden en zijne dapperheid en kjijskunde varen hoog geroemd, zoowel door Engelschen als Afrikaners. Zulke mannen had men noodigen het was geen wonder, dat Pieter Lavras Uys, kort na zijn aankomst, gekozen werd als een der kommandanten" (p. 39).

Van Oordt never ascribes perfection to his Voortrekkers. Indeed, he repeatedly calls attention to some of their faults. The most glaring of these is what twentieth-century Afrikaners would term *broedertwis*, or fraternal strife. This comes to the fore in the second chapter when prominent leaders of the Great Trek are introduced as they participate in a *bosberaad* to settle a dispute between Potgieter and Gert Maritz. They are grudgingly reconciled only after Cilliers mediates between them. Van Oordt declares frankly that the controversy arose because "in der waarheid echter waren de twee Kommandanten jaloersch op elkander en vooral Potgieter, die zooals wij zeiden, zeer heerschzuchtig was" (p. 20) and five chapters later describes another example of tension between these two. Writing in the mid-1890s, Van Oordt sees historic continuity in the self-destructive Afrikaans temperament: "Het was de oude storie van jaloezie en nijd, die tusschen de Emigranted tweedracht deed ontstaan, en ongelukkig nog tot op dezen huidigen dag de oorzaak is waarom wij Afrikaners niet *één* machtige natie kunnen worden" (p. 74).

Nor are the Voortrekkers in *David Malan* perfect military strategists. When David visits the camp of Johannes Botha along the Bushman River, he perceives that "dit lager zoo ongeregeld was. Het was eigenlijk volstrekt geen lager", but a cluster of wagons that would be too scattered to afford noteworthy resistence in the event of an attack. One young man whom Malan queries about this dismisses the supposed threat by declaring that "the Kaffers zal ons immers geen kwaad doen" (pp. 110-111). Having underestimated the threat to its existence, the Botha party is eventually obliterated in a Zulu assault. Van Oordt also describes without reserve the tactical blunder that Piet Uys and many of his mounted followers make by pursuing ostensibly fleeing Zulu warriors into a kloof where more thn 10 000 of Dingaan's soldiers are

hiding but rise up to slay these trapped Boers, who are unable to implement their conventional open field strategy of making "storm-loopen" (pp. 168-169).

Notwithstanding his unveiled Afrikaner nationalism, Van Oordt carefully emphasises that some English-speaking South Africans also merit praise. He singles out Lindley in this regard, describing how this missionary ministered to the grief-stricken Voortrekkers after Retief and his followers are slain at Dingaan's royal kraal: "Als een waardige volger van Christus ging hij van tent tot tent om troostwoorden te spreken tot de gebrokenen van harte, en hen te wijzen opn den grooten Redder uit ellende". Van Oordt explains that these emigrants never forgot Lindley and indeed some of them named a village in the Orange Free State after him. "Moge zijn naam steeds in eeere worde gehouden!" admonishes van Oordt (pp. 133-134). He also lauds the "brave Engelschen" from Port Natal who fell seeking to aid the Voortrekkers in Natal in 1838: "Zij waren uitgetrokken om de Afrikaners te ondersteunen en allen lieten hun leven voor de zaak" (p. 158). Although Van Oordt briefly criticises British colonial policy in the Cape as instrumental in compelling Boers there to join the Great Trek, there is otherwise not a negative word about the English in *David Malan*.

On the other hand, indigenous Africans fare very poorly under Van Oordt's pen. The attitude of Martje's father, who has earned his stripes fighting the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, sets the tone: "Hij had geleerd om nooit en Kaffer te vertrouwen . . ." (p. 34), and the general impression of black Africans that emerges is one of treachery. To be sure, Van Oordt can laud the "dapperheid en doodsverachting der Zulu's" in battle (p. 162), but these martial attributes pale in comparison to the duplicity of the African characters in general and especially their leaders.

Though aesthetically very weak and unimaginative, this ground-breaking work of historical fiction may well have exercised an influence in shaping young Afrikaners' perception of the Voortrekkers for many years, at least until Gustav Preller began to write extensively about the Great Trek early in the twentieth century. As Van Oordt's sympathetic biographer, Petrus Johannes Nienaber (1910-1995), who was born after the first series of volumes in the ZAHB had been completed and who became a teenager some twenty-seven years after *David Malan* appeared in print, noted in 1936, "Dié Historie-Biblioteek was vir 'n lang tyd de mees geliefde boeke onder ons Afrikaanse jeug, en vandag nog vind hul veel byval".[8] This harmonises with Huigen's retrospective and more detached judgment of the contribution of Van Oordt's series to the awakening and early nurturing of Afrikaner nationalism shortly

before, during, and immediately after the Second Anglo-Boer War. "Door bij grote groepen Afrikaners zo'n besef van een gemeenschappelijk verleden te kweken, konden de boeken van die ZAHB een bijdrage aan het nationalisme leveren bij de afstammelingen van de Voortrekkers én bij hen die altijd in de Kaapkolonie waren blijven wonen", reasoned this literary historian. "Door het propageren van een eigen, Afrikaner beeld van de geschiedenis konden ze ook het gevoel van eigenheid en eigenwaarde van de Afrikaners ten opzichte van de Engelsen helpen versterken".[9]

The Great Trek as Exodus: Kestell's and Hofmeyr's *De Voortrekkers*

De Voortrekkers of Het Dagboek van Izak van der Merwe, which was published two years after *David Malan*, demonstrates vividly the confluence of Afrikaner nationalism and Christian sentiment in the sub-genre of historical fiction under consideration. Given the backgrounds of its two authors, John Daniel Kestell and Nico Hofmeyr, this is not at all surprising. The former, as stated in Chapter II, was the son of an early English settler in the Eastern Cape and an Afrikaans mother. He became a *dominee* in the Dutch Reformed Church and took a keen interest in the unfolding of Afrikaner nationalism; indeed, so great was his interest in the history of Afrikanerdom that, as we have seen, he played a prominent rôle in the festivities marking centenary of the Great Trek in 1938. Nico Hofmeyr, Kestell's brother-in-law, was also a colleague in the Dutch Reformed ministry, although after serving briefly in that capacity he spent much of his career as an educational official. These two gentlemen collaborated on their historical reconstruction of the Great Trek and put their keen cognizance of the Old Testament to frequent use in developing its structure and metaphorical aspects, arguably excessively so.

The narrative structure and plot of *De Voortrekkers of Het Dagboek van Izak van der Merwe* bear a striking resemblance to those of *David Malan*. In brief, like that antecedent novel for adolescents, the one by Kestell and Hofmeyr is a weaving together of a fictionalised general history of the Great Trek, beginning in the Eastern Cape and ending shortly after the Battle of Blood River, and a melodramatic subplot rotating around the romantic relationship of two young participants in the migration. Remarkably enough, the young protagonist is present at most critical points in the history of the Great Trek and repeatedly distinguishes himself through his bravery and other commendable attributes. This adds a didactic, axiological

dimension to the novel; clearly Izak van der Merwe is a heroic model to be emulated by Afrikaners of the 1890s. *De Voortrekkers of Het Dagboek van Izak van der Merwe* differs, however, in that it employs a first-person narrator. To be sure, the title is misleading. One need not read many pages of this book before realising that it is not a contemporary account written by a teenaged farm boy, but a retrospective one penned from a theologically informed point of view. The underlying narratorial premise is thus essentially implausible.

The plot begins on Christmas Eve in 1834 when the Van der Merwe family, who farm at an undisclosed place in the Eastern Cape, discover that several of their neighbours have been attacked by Xhosas in the so-called "Kaffer Wars". Shortly thereafter, this family, together with others in the area, learn of many farmers' plans to quit the region and re-establish themselves elsewhere, preferably in Natal. Discussions preceding the Van der Merwes' and their neighbours' decision to join the migration allow Kestell and Hofmeyr to voice what by the 1890s were regarded in Afrikaans circles as the essential causes of the Great Trek, especially such insufferable conditions as the ineffectiveness of the British colonial administration to protect them from indigenous Africans and the economically devastating terms under which slavery had recently been abolished. They sell their farms for a pittance, pack their wagons, and join the trek led by Hendrik Potgieter.

Almost immediately the trekkers encounter hostile blacks, however, and violently strained race relations remain the principal narrative thread in the historical narrative. Kestell and Hofmeyr relate how they successfully--though not without incurring losses--fend off a major Matabele assault at Vechtkop (p. 63) and how the seemingly invincible Hendrik Potgieter leads an effective punitive expedition against that tribe (p. 125). As part of their initial contract with Dingaan, a group of prominent Voortrekkers defeat Sikonyella, who has stolen large numbers of the Zulu monarch's cattle (p. 126). Culminating their protracted struggle to gain a foothold in the Promised Land of Natal, Andries Pretorius, Sarel Cilliers, and other Voortrekkers defeat a numerically vastly superior Zulu force at what would subsequently be called the Battle of Blood River. Before doing so, these Christian warriors enter into their special covenant with God (p. 151ff). In a very general sense, these conflicts parallel the struggle of the Mosaic Hebrews in their conquest of Canaan.

Hofmeyr and Kestell emphasise repeatedly the underlying religious nature of the Voortrekkers, a point they begin to underscore in the first paragraph of their text. There, Boers on the Eastern Cape are diligently preparing to celebrate Christmas in 1834. Before the Van

der Merwes embark on the Great Trek, they have regular family devotions (*huisgodsdienst*) at which the patriarch of the clan reads from Genesis 12 and those present sing from the Psalter (pp. 35-36). Moreover, the narrator has vivid recollections of celebrating the Lord's Supper quarterly in church (p. 8). Familial spirituality is not contingent on geographical stability but continues *en route* to Natal. Kestell and Hofmeyr underscore the piety of Sarel Cilliers and point out that his devotional life meshes well with that of other Voortrekkers. They thus pray collectively while under attack early in the trek (p. 67), and when an army of Boers goes forth to punish the Zulus after the massacre of Piet Retief and his company at Dingaan's kraal, Cilliers accompanies them and conducts worship every evening (p. 190f). It is as a worshipping community that these pioneers are seen to be acting on God's behalf, not merely in terms of human vengeance, and as a people of faith they make their vow before the Battle of Blood River (pp. 191-194). This identification of the Afrikaners in question as a generally religious people is essential to the Biblical identity which Hofmeyr and Kestell establish for them as they proceed through the wilderness as a faithful, covenant people seeking their divine destiny in a promised land. Without this foundation, the superstructure of Biblical allusions which the two authors construct would be insecure.

In places the identity of the Voortrekkers with the Hebrews of the Exodus is so explicit and self-conscious as to rule out all subtlety about this pivotal dimension in the novel. This, too, is something which Kestell and Hofmeyr establish early on. At the close of the first chapter, they explicitly compare the prospective Boer migrants with the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt, partly by means of Passover elements. "In bitterheid des geesten en gedurige vreeze aten wij dus de lekkernijen van den Kerstdag, gelijk de kinderen Israëls hun paaschlam met bittere saus mengden", recalls Izak van der Merwe of their Christmas dinner immediately after the lethal Xhosa attack on their neighbours (p. 13). The rough-hewn but at times sagacious Hans Swarts voices the identity of the group with the people of the Exodus upon hearing of Sir Andries Stockenström's efforts to prevent disgruntled Afrikaners from leaving the Cape Colony. "Zooveel te beter voor ons", declares this prospective trekker, "maar als Farao ons mocht achterna zetten, zal hij gewis in de Roode-, ik bedoel Oranje Rivier omkomen" (p. 31).

In Kestell's and Hofmeyr's historical pageant, the casting of the indigenous Africans as the Canaanite foes of the trekking New Israel is facilitated by the depiction of the former as an inferior race. Young Van der Merwe underscores this point as a corollary to his description of Hendrik Potgieter as both a natural leader of and a man on a par with his fellow Voortrekkers.

"Wij Boeren erkennen geen hoogen en lageren stand in ons midden; elke Boer is een man en een broeder, hetzij rijk of arm, hetzij goed of slecht", he explains. But this doctrine of social equality does not extend beyond the pale of the *volk*. The other side of the coin merits equal emphasis: "Geen gelijkheid tusschen blanken en zwarten, de grootste gelijkheid onder blanken en blanken — dat is onze leuze altijd geweest" (p. 37).

All of the African tribes with whom the Voortrekkers interact are portrayed negatively, some significantly more so than others. Relations with the Matabeles do not extend beyond armed conflict. Before these blacks attack the wagons, Hannie suggests to Schalk van der Merwe that their chief, Moselekatze, "meer op een duivel dan op een mensch moest gelijken", a fear to which he replies negatively, stressing that he has heard that this particular Matabele "een vriendelijk gelaat heeft en dat zijne stem zacht als die eener vrouw is!" (p. 65). Unconvinced, Hannie retorts that Moselekatze is thus "vriendelijk en toch zoo wreed, zacht van stem en toch zoo bloeddorstig en onmenschelijk — wie kan schijn en werkelijkheid van elkander in deze wereld onderscheiden?" (p. 65). Moselekatze's subjects fare no better. Kestell and Hofmeyr describe how "de wilden sloegen hun schilden met assagaaien, [en] riepen hun geduchten oorlogskreet uit" (p. 66) and, two pages later, call these warring Africans "de woeste vijand" and "zwaarte duivelen" (p. 68). They have nothing positive to say about the Matabeles and, with regard to Moselekatze, note with relief that "de onbeschofte wreedaard" disregards Piet Retief's peace initiative and consequently is driven with his ethnic fellows northward across the Limpopo (pp. 95-96).

The depiction of the Zulus is only marginally more complimentary, and the few positive words Kestell and Hofmeyr include about them serve in their rhetorical scheme to accentuate the heroic virtues of the Voortrekkers and underscore the motif of the latter as a chosen people who proceed under divine guidance to the occupation of their new homeland. While sitting with his children and other migrants around a campfire *en route* to the Drakensberg, the even-tempered Schalk van der Merwe warns inquisitive youth that "de Kaffers der Kaapkolonie zijn als lammeren, vergeleken bij de Zulu's" and exclaims, "God verhoede dat wij met die wreede natie in botsing komen!" The senior Van der Merwe then relates how during the conquests of Shaka (whom he calls "meer duivel dan mensch" [p. 57]) the Zulus destroyed their enemies: "In de stilte des nachts werden hunne kralen bestormd en mannen, vrouwen en kinderen vermoord,..... [*sic*] behalve de schoonste jonge meisjes, die naar den koning gevoerd, en de jonge mannen, die bij de Zulu-legers ingelijfd werden" (p. 59). Yet Hofmeyr and Kestell take

pains to point out that some members of that tribe treat the Voortrekkers civilly. The narrator reports that when the Retief party initially enters Zululand, "de Kaffers, die wij aantroffen, stapten er henen als koningen zoo onafhankelijk en toch waren zij uiterst vriendelijk jegens ons". These indigenes welcome the Voortrekkers with beer in a spirit of hospitality. This reception leads young Van der Merwe to draw an ethnic comparison: "Het onderscheid tusschen den beleefden, waardigen Zulu en den onbeschoften, lagen Xosa trof ons allen terstond" (pp. 107-108).

This initially warm reception does not, however, foreshadow either harmonious relations between the Zulus and the Voortrekkers or a positive depiction of the former. Indeed, upon their initial arrival at Dingaan's kraal, they discover that the Zulus there are "een geoefend leger . . . uitgenomen de zwarte, bloeddorstige gelaatstrekken en vreemde kleedij en wapens". Retief assures an associate of "het gevreesde opperhoofd" and "de sluwe Kaffer" Dingaan, "Gij zijt inderdaad een krijgshaftig volk" (pp. 109, 111, 113). The narrator also describes the royal wives who dance for the Voortrekkers on this occasion as a repulsive lot: "Haar zang was zonder schoonheid, hare bewegingen allesbehalve sierlijk; met moeite slechts kon ik mijne neiging om in luiden lach uit te schateren bedwingen!" (pp. 117-118).

Against the backdrop of this negative if piecemeal group portrayal, the eventual brutality of the Zulu resistance to the Voortrekkers' occupation of their Promised Land comes as no great surprise. Kestell and Hofmeyr nevertheless provide additional foreshadowing bridges. When, during Retief's first visit to the dastardly Dingaan's royal kraal, the Zulu monarch informs his visitors, "Wij hebben alle zwarte volkeren aan deze zijde van de Drakensbergen opgegeten" and adds the marginally cryptic warning, "Er zijn nog andere volkeren, die wij wenschen op te eten!", Izak van der Merwe shares with two of his Afrikaans friends his premonition that the Voortrekkers entering Natal are among those on Dingaan's menu (pp. 113-114). Not long thereafter, the realistically pessimistic Hans Swarts, again serving as a counterweight to the naïveté of Retief, warns him of impending danger: "Ik ken de Kaffers beter dan u ze kent. Onder Kaffers ben ik opgegroeid, en als ik één ding versta, dan is het de geaardheid van die schelmen. Zij zijn door en door valsch en onvertrouwbaar" (p. 130).

A Female Perspective: M.E. Rothmann's *Kinders van die Voortrek*

Rothmann's volume reflects vividly its author's gender perspective, professional background, interest in Christian piety, and concern for the nurturing of children. Born in Swellendam in 1875, this wagon builder's daughter was trained as a teacher in Stellenbosch and in 1896 attained a baccalaureate degree at the University of the Cape of Good Hope in Cape Town with honours in literature and philosophy. She taught briefly in Swellendam before moving to a similar post in Johannesburg, which the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in 1899 forced her to vacate. In 1901 Rothmann took up a teaching position in Grahamstown but left both it and an unsatisfying marriage there to return to Swellendam. In 1917 she joined her brother Fritz in the Barberton district of the Eastern Transvaal and subsequently resided briefly in Ermelo and Pretoria. While in the Transvaal Rothmann began to write seriously, using accounts which she and her brother compiled from elderly erstwhile Voortrekkers for use in her first book, *Kinders van die Voortrek*, which she completed shortly before joining the staff of the Cape Town daily newspaper *Die Burger* in 1922.[10]

This former teacher perceived a glaring *lacuna* in the children's literature then available in Afrikaans about subjects that were immediately relevant to young South Africans whose mother tongue was that emerging language. "Dit het seker almal getref, wat oor die saak dink, wat 'n ryk voorraad materiaal ons volk besit vir die onderwys van geskiedenis, natuurkunde, plantkunde, geologie — ek hoef nie almal te noem nie", Rothmann declared in her unpaginated Preface without referring to the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Historie-Bibliotheek*, which, of course, was in Dutch and not Afrikaans. "Og word hierdie voorraad so min gebruik in ons skole. Hoe romanties en inspirerend vir die jong gemoed is ons volksgeskiedenis nie; en tog, gaan maar in byna enige 'Kindergarten' en hoor of daar iets daarvan vertel word?" She lamented that foreign elements dominated to the exclusion of ethnically more germane material: "Jy kom op 'Robinson Crusoe' en 'Hiawatha' se spore af, maar die van ons mense, glo omdat dit so volop en byderhand is, trek niemand se aandag nie". Rothmann explained that "hierdie boekie is geskrywe as 'n poging om die toestand van sake te verbeter".

Rothmann shaped her reconstruction of the Great Trek to allow young readers a high degree of identity with its principal characters. They are Gert and Mina de Lange, eleven-year-old twin siblings of a family in the Eastern Cape whose parents, Gerhardus de Lange and his

wife, emigrated there from Boland many years earlier, possibly before the birth of these two, and established along the Fish River a large cattle farm called Diepkloof. There are two older brothers, Dirk and Jannie, and two older sisters, Lenie and Martjie, all of whom appear to be teenagers. A pair of slaves, outa Goliat and ai Lys, have accompanied them to Diepkloof, as has her fourteen-year-old son, whose name is not specified. Internal evidence suggests strongly that the action opens in or about 1835. Owing to tensions with the indigenous population, the family lives a precarious existence, and the men never venture far from the house unarmed. Xhosa raiders frequently steal the family's cattle. While Gerhardus and Dirk are away on a commando patrol to inflict retribution on such thieves, young Gert overhears the planning of another raid on their vulnerable farm. He warns his family, who withstand the attack with minimal loss of their livestock. During this brief violent encounter, Gert earns his initial stripes by dispatching one of the raiders with a rifle and after this frontier *rite de passage* feels that he has crossed the threshold into adulthood. Not long after Dirk and "Pa" return, the family begins to discuss the possibility of joining the exodus from the region (the term "Great Trek" does not occur in *Kinders van die Voortrek*), and the *pater familias* soon decides that they have little choice but to leave the farm they have painstakingly built up and proceed north. He and his wife, together with their adult neighbours, have mixed feelings about this venture, whereas their children evince considerable enthusiasm for it. Ou Goliat and ai Lys, nominally emancipated from their thralldom, fear the prospect of being left behind at the mercy of the indigenous Africans and successfully plead to accompany the De Langes.

Notwithstanding her emphasis on characters who are children, to a considerable extent Rothmann reproduces the heroic image of the Voortrekkers which Preller and others had meticulously created and were continuing to magnify many years after *Kinders van die Voortrek* was published. She does not dwell on the heroism of the Voortrekkers, although it is impossible to ascertain whether this reflects the fact that she wrote before Preller's endeavours to create that image had reached full blossom or, perhaps, is attributable to her primary preoccupation with the lives of children on the trek. In all likelihood, the fact that most of her informants early in the twentieth century were quite young during the 1830s also influenced her decision to emphasise the migrants' world as seen primarily through its younger participants.

While Rothmann does not use much of her text to trumpet the heroic virtues of Piet Retief, Sarel Cilliers, or other well-known Voortrekkers, she limns certain attributes of the migrants as a whole in broad strokes. One is their unity, which is virtually idyllic. Rothmann

describes a scene on the trek in the most harmonious of terms: "Anderkant was al die ander ooms en tantes en jong mense, so bekend aan mekaar geword deur die saamlewe in die veld asof hulle almal kinders van één vader was" (p. 32). She intrudes into the narrative with a pedantic comparison of social relations then and in the early twentieth century, admitting that necessity can be the mother of virtue: "Is dit 'n wonder dat die ou mense van ons dag so dikwels sug en kla dat daar nie meer liefde onder die Afrikaners is nie? In daardie dae was die een se nood en gevaar ook die ander syne, en die een se voorspoed het die ander nie ongeseën laat bly nie" (p. 34).

Pieter van der Merwe Erasmus's *Twee Voortrekkertjies*

Unlike Rothmann, Erasmus did not conduct interviews as part of his research but relied heavily on printed secondary works. Indeed, he could hardly have acknowledged more explicitly his indebtedness to the well-known Preller. In his italicised one-sentence Preface, this otherwise unknown figure in Afrikaans literary history declared:

> *Die skrywer is baie dank verskuldig aan die twee welbekende werke van Gustav Preller: "Piet Retief" en "Voortrekkermense" (al die dele).*

The plot and narrative technique of *Twee Voortrekkertjies* are appropriately uncomplicated for adolescent readers. In brief, this novel is a fictionalised history of the Great Trek which introduces that migration by focussing on the participation of two youths in it. They interact with many of the lionised champions of Afrikaans history and, *mirabile dictu*, are at or near the centre of action in nearly every major event of that pivotal epoch in the saga of the Afrikaners. The text spans 151 pages and is divided into sixteen chapters of varying length. Erasmus employs a conventional omniscient narrator to relate how two fifteen-year-old cousins from a farm near Paarl, Koos and Gert Steyn, embark with their uncle, Piet Steyn, on the Great Trek in 1835 and during the next three years follow it to Natal before returning to their home in the Cape. Initially joining Hendrik Potgieter's trek, they subsequently become part of that which Piet Retief leads into Natal. This change allows Erasmus to include such key elements as the massacre of Retief and his delegation at Dingaan's royal kraal and the Battle of Blood River,

both of which were by the 1930s deeply entrenched in the collective memory of Afrikaners as fundamental to their understanding of their ethnic history and the supposed hand of God in it. Through their participation in the Great Trek, Koos and Gert Steyn evolve from typical agrarian youths into young men who gradually acquire and evince fundamental traits which Preller and other creators of the Afrikaans historiography of the migration had emphasised as essentials of Voortrekker masculinity.

Erasmus establishes in the almost exclusively male cast of *Twee Voortrekkertjies* several heroic models for the Steyns to emulate. Potgieter, for example, evinces qualities of leadership and compassion. His wagon, of course, is at the head of the train (p. 32), and it is he who demands that his followers close ranks and circle their wagons at night as a key element in their defensive strategy (p. 43). The generally adversarial relationship between Potgieter and indigenous Africans is thus indicated, yet Erasmus also portrays this prominent Voortrekker as sympathetic to Chief Makwana and his Bataung subjects and, upon realising that some of them are malnourished, gives them foodstuffs (pp. 52-53).

Sarel Cilliers, Potgieter's counterpart whose Christian piety emerges repeatedly in the historiography of the Great Trek, adds corresponding dimensions to the model heroic type in *Twee Voortrekkertjies*. At an early stage he begins to call the trekkers together for divine worship (p. 31), although Erasmus does not develop the religious life of the general migration to any noteworthy degree, and explicit Christianity is largely absent from most of the narrative. Much later in the narrative, however, this leader resurfaces to play a key rôle in prompting divine intervention in the history of *die volk*. Before the Battle of Blood River, "Onder leiding van die voorbeeldige en godvrugtige Sarel Cilliers het die hele kommando 'n plegtige belofte afgelê: as God hulle die oorwinning skenk, sou hulle 'n kerk bou en die dag van die oorwinning as 'n dankdag en 'n Sabbat vier tot in die verste nageslagte" (p. 140).

As in Preller's biography of him, Piet Retief is depicted in *Twee Voortrekkerties* as an appealing, congenial leader who inspires others to follow him. The youthful protagonists quickly perceive these and other positive traits in Retief: "Koos en Gert het sommer dadelik van die vriendelike man gehou en graag vir hom iets gedoen" (p. 73). A gifted if naïvely innocent negotiator, Retief deals with apparent effectiveness with both the Zulu leadership north of the Tugela River and the British colonists in Port Natal (pp. 74-75). This renowned Voortrekker is cordial and just to blacks as well as whites; Erasmus relates how he assists Dingaan by compelling a Basuto chief to return cattle stolen from the Zulus (pp. 82, 90).

Andries Pretorius embodies decidedly more militant attributes. After the trekkers receive the devastating news of the massacre of Piet Retief and his delegation at Dingaan's royal kraal, they are emotionally fortified by the news "dat Andries Pretorius wat bekend was vir sy dapperheid, met 'n kommando uit die Kolonie sou kom om vir goed 'n end te maak aan die moordlustige Dingaan se mag" (p. 129). When this far-ranging Voortrekker leader is chosen *Kommandant-generaal* to succeed the late Gert Maritz, an uncle of Koos and Gert Steyn assures them on the basis of Pretorius's physiognomy of his timely appropriateness and ability to assure the security of the threatened migrants: "Ek hou baie van die man se gesig", he declares. "'n Mens kan sien dat hy 'n man van die daad is en ek dink hy is net die soort leier wat die mense hier nodig het" (p. 139).

Even Paul Kruger, the future president of the South African Republic who in 1835 embarked on the Great Trek as a ten-year-old, makes an appearance, albeit a cameo one, in *Twee Vortrekkertjies* as a juvenile to whom young readers can relate. Erasmus identifies him imprecisely as "dieselfde Paul Kruger wat later president van Transvaal geword het". This youthful trekker impresses his elders with signs of his subsequent strength as a leader: "Later het hulle uitgevind dat hy besonder sterk was vir sy ouderdom en dat hulle goed moes skiet om vir hom kers vas te hou" (p. 30). In the eighth chapter, it is said of young Kruger that he "het al 'n leeu op sy kerfstok gehad" (p. 69).

Under the leadership of redoubtable men like Retief and Potgieter, the Voortrekkers in general emerge distinctly as virtuous if imperfect people who cope well with exceptionally trying circumstances that have been inflicted on them. At no point does the characterisation of them contradict their heroic image which then prevailed in Afrikaans historiography. In the century-long debate about the motives of the Voortrekkers for leaving the Cape, Erasmus comes down vaguely on the side of victimisation, although perhaps unwittingly, *i.e.* without cognizance of the rhetorical disputes involved. Indeed, one finds scant discussion of the motives for the migration in *Twee Voortrekkertjies*. For the most part, this is limited to a few transparently didactic paragraphs in the first chapter in which two generations of Steyns chat about conditions in the Eastern Cape. Echoing in greatly telescoped form well-worn lines from conventional Afrikaans historiography, Oom Piet laments that the Xhosa were raiding farms there and have already killed approximately fifty settlers in the process, and that the colonial government is unable to protect its subjects from such assaults. "Ons lewens is so onseker, dat 'n hele klomp van ons boere maar besluit het om ons waens op te pak en weg te trek" (pp. 4-5).

The rectitude and magnitude of their reasons for doing so are underscored by the fact that, as Koos and Gert discover at the outset, some of the trekkers are leaving vast agricultural holdings behind (p. 26).

Erasmus only infrequently highlights the down-to-earth humanity of the Voortrekkers, calling attention to traits that are common denominators in the human race, regardless of historical circumstances. As 1835 yields to 1836, for instance, the party of migrants celebrate by playing games and discharging firearms when the clock strikes twelve (p. 31). Erasmus devotes far more space to describing group characteristics that directly help them cope with life in the wilderness. They are particularly innovative in building willow rafts for crossing the Great River, for example, and devising a way of pulling them across its current with ropes (pp. 38-40). Less tangibly, the Voortrekkers appreciate the necessity of maintaining their internal solidarity in the face of real or perceived dangers from indigenous Africans into whose territory they are making incursions (p. 43).

Far more prominently underscored in *Twee Voortrekkertjies* are such manly traits as horsemanship, marksmanship, and fighting ability. Erasmus echoes ethnic tradition in informing young readers that the Voortrekkers were talented riders and dauntless warriors in armed conflicts with black Africans. Long before the Battle of Blood River, the male Voortrekkers are depicted holding off much larger numbers of indigenes who attack their wagons only to be mowed down in droves (pp. 60-61). Moreover, these pioneers kill Africans and burn their villages, apparently without compunction (p. 71). Nor do the Voortrekkers ever evince any fear of or reluctance to engage in armed conflict (pp. 112, 124ff, 146ff). When not shooting blacks, the men reveal their strength in the arduous task of crossing the Drakensberg with their wagons (pp. 84-88) or otherwise quietly demonstrating the perseverence to continue their trek. Though faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the vast majority continue their journey month after month, year after year, until they reach Natal or the Transvaal. Only a few abandon the trek and return to the Cape. In one of his few references to the distaff side of the Voortrekker population, Erasmus credits the women with having at least as much backbone as the men: "Gelukkig het die meeste mense moed gehou, veral die vrouens. Hulle het besluit om in Natal te bly en 'n paar man Kolonie-toe af te vaardig om daar hulp te gaan soek" (pp. 127-128).

By contrast, the overarching description of black Africans is correspondingly negative and reflects vividly what Tötemeyer argued cogently was the prevailing image in Afrikaans

children's literature generally for many decades. "There are a host of examples where blacks are depicted as savages, where they go about naked, eat raw meat, and other gruesome objects, commit atrocities when in a stupor, and have savage appetites etc.", she generalised.[11] One gains the impression from reading Erasmus's book that indigenous Africans are almost exclusively adult male warriors who never engage in activities other than stealing livestock and preparing for and waging war. In other words, Africans are not normal human beings but merely violent negative referents or foils to European settlers. This is established early on in Erasmus's narrative. Through the voice of Oom Piet, readers hear before the Great Trek begins that the Xhosa are "barbare" who have murdered settlers and burnt their houses (pp. 4-5). This characterisation sets the tone for much of what is subsequently related about the indigenous population from the Cape across what would become the Orange Free State into Natal. Koos and Gert are urged before their departure to practise shooting their rifles in order to save their lives from the "Kaffers" (p. 15). Such nomenclature, common in Afrikaans writing during the 1930s, occurs repeatedly in *Twee Voortrekkertjies*. The indigenes are "barbare" (*e.g.* pp. 43, 60, 140, 147) or "Kaffers" (*e.g.* pp. 31, 50, 142, 144) in several chapters. Whereas the Voortrekkers are almost inevitably depicted as being on the defensive, the blacks on whose territory they are encroaching are portrayed as attackers of the most gruesome sort. Stefanus Erasmus, a cousin of Oom Piet, arrives shortly after the latter has led a service of worship to tell a tale of unmitigated woe while he and one of his three sons had gone elephant hunting beyond the Vaal River: "Terwyl ek en hierdie seun nou die dag 'n hele ent van die waens af was, val die Matabeles my ander kinders en die kleurlinge aan, en vermoor hulle almal. Toe ons by die waens kom, het net die lyke daar gelê" (p. 58).

This image is reinforced when Piet Retief and his delegation (including, of course, the young Steyns) make their initial visit to Dingaan's royal kraal. The massive army there encompasses approximately 20 000 men, a magnitude that underscores the martial nature of the Zulus (p. 79). Erasmus adorns them with signs of their barbarity and exotic otherness. The following morning the visiting Voortrekkers witness a spectacle whose only purpose in *Twee Voortrekkertjies* is to underscore the militant essence of the Zulus:

> "En met oop monde het ons maats sit en kyk na die oorlogsdanse van tweeduisend jong Zoeloes. Ry agter ry dans die soldate vorentoe en agtertoe, vorentoe en agtertoe. Met dik knopkieries hou hul tyd op hul skildvelle. Die

> lawaai is verskriklik. En asof die nog nie hard genoeg is nie, gee die dansende soldate lang huilskreë. Dan spring hulle in die lug op, dan tree hulle vorentoe, dan agtertoe, en al die tyd bewe die vetgesmeerde lyf van elke Zoeloe asof hy kouekoors het" (pp. 79-80).

The Steyn youths notice that Dingaan himself, seated in the centre of his residence before his captains and counsellors, is an exotic character immeasurably different from themselves and other Boers with whom they are familiar: "Koos en Gert se oë bly strak op die gevreesde Zoeloekoning met sy vet, dik lyf en groot maag. Hy is gekleed in 'n lang gestreepte kleed, wat lyk soos 'n toga. Sy oë kon hulle nie sien nie, want 'n sluier van fyn rooi toutjies het daaroor gehang" (p. 81).

The last few chapters are preoccupied with the murder of Retief and his party as well as other armed conflicts between the Voortrekkers and "die vyand", *i.e.* the Zulus, who are described as "moordlustige Zoeloes" (p. 110) and "bloeddorstige wreedaards" (p. 124). True to deeply entrenched convention in Afrikaans popular writing, Erasmus dwells on atrocities committed in attacks on wagon trains. In one such scene, Koos and Gert view the charred remains of a wagon: "By die voorwiel van die wa lê 'n kindjie en in die wa. . . . Maar ons sal liewers Koos en Gert se voorbeeld volg en anderpad kyk. Die verbryselde kop van die kindjie en die bloed wat uit die wa tap, is genoeg om ons maats te laat besef hoe wreed die mense in hulle slaap vermoor is" (p. 113). From start to finish, *Twee Voortrekkertjies* contrasts the heroic virtues of the Voortrekkers with the treachery of the Zulus and other Africans.

Sanctifying a Convicted Murderer: Anna de Villiers's *Die Wit Kraai*

From a romanticising perspective of Afrikaner nationalism, as the centenary of the Great Trek approached in the 1930s it was a comparatively easy task to write historical fiction in an almost hagiographic vein about such Voortrekkers as Piet Retief and Sarel Cilliers, who had repeatedly been lionised by Preller and other creators of the heroic myth. At another point of the spectrum, however, the noted Voortrekker Hans de Lange posed problems, because after settling in Natal he was eventually sent to the gallows for the murder of an indigenous African. Dr Anna de Villiers, who was not only a seasoned Afrikaner nationalist but also a professional

Afrikaans lexicographer and amateur historian, tackled the challenge of writing a novel focusing on this previously largely ignored character. In doing so, she made a minor contribution towards expanding the frontiers of the heroic myth by ignoring readily available facts which, had she heeded them, may have compelled her to present De Lange in an unheroic light. De Villiers's treatment of this scout is noteworthy because of what it indicates about the power of ethnic sentiment over dispassionate historical research.

Notwithstanding her lifelong involvement in the institutions of Afrikaner nationalism, De Villiers held a qualified attitude towards the heroic myth which it had spawned and which underlay much of the historical fiction about the Great Trek. In one of her subsequent books about that migration, she emphasised matter-of-factly, "Dit is belangrik om te onthou dat al die Voortrekkers nie heldefigure was nie; nee, hulle was gewone indiwidue met al die eienskappe soos wat 'n mens dit in elke ander gemeenskap vind, veral onder die plattelandse bevolking". On the one hand, De Villiers could point to such laudatory characteristics as "godsdienssin, dapperheid, deursettingsvermoë en geduld wat van talle van hulle ware helde gemaak het". At the same time, she acknowledged that one could find amongst the Voortrekkkers "minder aangename trekke, soos heerssug onder sommige leiers, wat aanleiding gegee het tot 'n gebrek aan samewerking en tot noodlottige gebeurtenisse soos dit die geval was met Hendrik Potgieter en Piet Uys op die Vlugkommando in 1839". Furthermore, De Villiers conceded, "Daar was die twissiekies, soos blyk uit die gedurige weiering van sommiges om eerw. Erasmus Smit as leraar te aanvaar self nadat hy deur goewerneur Piet Retief as amptelike predikant van die trekgemeenskap aangestel is". Turning from the realm of religion to private habits, she added to her syllabus of Voortrekker sins a qualified generalisation that "daar was selfs mense wat misbruik van sterk drank gemaak het, hoewel dit selde voorgekom het" without specifying on what this allegation was based, but flatly denied illegal conduct on the part of the Voortrekkers": "Sekerlik was daar geen misdadigers nie".[12]

Notwithstanding this subsequent disclaimer, De Villiers' Voortrekkers in *Die Wit Kraai*, which was written during a period of intensifying Afrikaner nationalism, incorporate much of what by the late 1930s had become conventional heroic attributes in fiction about the Great Trek. Throughout most of her narrative, she embeds signs of valour and other virtues of the emigrating Boers in general and particularly - though with noteworthy exceptions to which we shall return briefly - in their principal leaders. They are a freedom-loving people who left the Cape not as adventurers - as some of their Anglophone contemporaries in that colony

contended - but in order to escape from British imperialist oppression and maladministration. Indeed, their thirst for liberty is so great that they are willing to risk immense perils to obtain it. De Lange's son-in-law Izak van Niekerk ponders this at an early stage of the Great Trek: "Vryheid bied hulle aan die trekgemeenskap. Vryheid en . . . die dood? Is vryheid dan ook aan bande gelê? Dan is ook vryheid g'n absolute vryheid nie? Swerwend, weg van hul voorvaderlike erfenis, om die vryheid te vind wat hulle in hul geboorteland ontsê is, het die Trekkers nou vryheid, maar 'n vryheid agterhaal deur die dood" (p. 49). Bravery is consequently a vital component of the collective Voortrekker character. These pioneers are undaunted, or nearly so, by man and beast alike. De Villiers even includes a scene in which Izak wrestles and slays a lioness to underscore the point (pp. 25-27). The greater valour of the Voortrekkers, however, is revealed in their dealings with indigenous Africans. De Villiers does not dwell on the confrontations of Piet Retief's party with King Dingaan of Zululand, choosing instead to highlight Voortrekker bravery by allowing both black and white characters to voice their respect for it. One elderly Zulu relates "hoe dapper Retief en sy manskappe hulle met hul knipnesse geweer en twintig Zoeloes afgemaak het voordat hul self doodgemartel is" (p. 137). When Andries Pretorius and his contingent arrive at the abandoned royal kraal and discover the remains of the massacre, this Voortrekker leader proclaims to his men that they "staan vandag voor die oop graf van helde wat hul lewe veil gehad het vir hul volk; ons staan by die ontsielde oorblyfsels van manne, vlees van ons vlees en bloed van ons bloed, wat met hul lewens geboet het vir ons vryheid" (p. 138). Some of these liberty-loving people have sufficient initiative to launch their own "Kliprivier-republiek" (p. 171). They are above all else a proud people, and when the governor of Natal asks De Lange's wife why her recalcitrant husband has not defended himself in court, she replies, "As u ons Boeremense ken, sal u weet dat ons trots is en my man voel in sy eer gekrenk omdat hy soos 'n gewone misdadiger behandel word" (p. 238). Their ethnic pride incorporates a vital dimension of group solidarity, and they rally as one behind De Lange in his hour of need (pp. 227, 247-249).

In fairness to De Villiers, it must be stressed that her image of the Voortrekkers in *Die Wit Kraai* is far from hagiographic and thus differs significantly from what, for example, Pieter van der Merwe Erasmus had presented to young Afrikaans readers only three years previously. Repeatedly she tempers her narrative with incidents which underscore anti-heroic elements in the general Afrikaans demeanour. There is considerable strife over the validity of Erasmus Smit's ministry (pp. 30-33), and his spouse, Susanne Smit, is both a gossip and boastful (pp. 22-

23). Indeed, although the Voortrekker women in general are intrepid souls, they also bicker a great deal (pp. 72), and even the element of bravery which is a consistent theme in *Die Wit Kraai* has its limits. Under threat of nocturnal attack, "Almal is moeg en uitgeput, maar 'n geheime vrees hou almal wakker" (p. 90). De Villiers does not veil her dislike of Hendrik Potgieter, particularly his autocratic and egotistical behaviour, and one of her characters voices a similar attitude towards him after the disaster at Italeni: "Potgieter het ons darem lelik in die steek gelaat" (p. 112)

In her severely flawed reconstruction of the murder case which sent De Lange to the gallows, De Villiers sacrifices historicity on the altar of nationalism. Her chronological framework for the legal proceedings is unnecessarily imaginative and simply does not reflect facts which were readily available had she done appropriate research. One reads in *Die Wit Kraai*, for example, that the trial began on 27 February 1861 (p. 231), but in fact it got underway on 20 February and was completed two days later. More seriously, De Villiers, reflecting her interpretation of the De Lange case as an instance of injustice at the hands of the British, insists that there was a change of venue from Ladysmith to Pietermaritzburg, because it was decided that owing to local Boer admiration of the accused in the former locale, it would have been impossible to impanel an impartial jury there (p. 230). There was in fact a change of venue, but it was precisely the reverse of what De Villiers believed. The trial, initially set for the colonial capital, was transferred to Ladysmith at the request of defence counsel Krogh. It was on his home turf that De Lange was tried and found guilty of murder. The most serious gaffe, however, and the one most damaging to De Villiers' case, is her assertion that De Lange was the victim of insensitive British colonial justice and his own pride in refusing to mount a defence is the fact that nearly all of the men who convicted him were fellow Afrikaners. A list of the nine jurors who arrived at the verdict by a vote of eight to one indicates that only two were British settlers: William Lazenby, J.R.M. Watson, Jakobus Labuschagne, Johannes Labuschagne, Gerrit Potgieter, Frederik Potgieter, Berent Jakobus Nell, Coenraad Lucas Pieters, and Adolph Krogman.[13]

The verdict which these men returned may have harmonised with local public opinion about the case. If one can rely on letters from Afrikaners and English-speakers alike that were printed in the *Natal Witness*, then a weekly newspaper in Pietermaritzburg, De Lange was virtually disowned by his Afrikaans neighbours in Klip River County after he was arrested for murdering one of his employees. To be sure, violent treatment of Zulus by European settlers

in Natal was a publicly debated topic at the time. While De Lange was awaiting trial in January 1861, a fellow colonist, Richard Smithwick, was sentenced to one month in gaol "on such spare diet as is consistent with his health, for every alternate week" for shooting a "Kafir" who subsequently recovered. There is no indication that the colony's courts were particularly lenient along racial lines. According to a published account of this particular case, Smithwick "was in the habit of giving way to his temper, and . . . this was not the first offence he had committed".[14] Some reformers pleaded in the press for more humane treatment of African employees. "I do not mean to say that the complaints of native laziness, impertinence, &c., are unfounded. It would be strange, indeed, if 150,000 savages could at once be metamorphosed into a steady labouring population", wrote one well-intentioned observer in Klip River County who shared a common colonial perception of indigenous Africans at that time. He urged readers to pay greater attention to their food, housing, and other living conditions in harmony with their fundamental Christian convictions as a *conditio sine qua non* for improving relations with employees.[15]

Writing to the *Natal Witness* at the beginning of March, *i.e.* after the trial but before the execution, an anonymous resident of Ladysmith identified only as "Memo" insisted that virtually everyone in the region was pleased with the verdict of guilty. He emphasised that there had not been an ethnic line of demarcation involved, noting that of the members of the jury, "two of whom only were Englishmen, and the rest his countrymen, and many of them his relatives and connections". Nevertheless, responses to the finding had been emotionally charged. "Every man of the jury seemed to have more than enough to do to repress his tears". This writer described De Lange's own reaction in terms which differed immensely from De Villiers' presentation of his supposed equanimity, stating that when the foreman of the journey announced its verdict "it was also painful to hear the old man, De Lange, exclaim, in Dutch, 'Not Guilty,' five times repeated". Furthermore, far from rejecting the judicial system because of its treatment of this convict, Boers in the Klip River district lauded the British colonial judge's conduct of the case: "The judge, not withstanding [*sic*] the peculiar circumstances under which he visited this place for the first time, has gained the greatest popularity. Not a Boer who would not, as they express it themselves, walk to him on bare knees". The predominantly Afrikaans jury had earned this writer's unqualified respect by not shielding their ethnic fellow from effective prosecution: "Here he was the relation, friend, or acquaintance of nearly every man who sat. At all events they knew him well by name and

reputation. Added to this, the jury sat for the first time to try one of themselves, and sentenced him to a disgraceful death. All honour, then, say I, to the jury, and the race they represent".[16]

Concluding Observations

Our survey of Dutch and Afrikaans fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek from the 1880s through the 1930s demonstrates that in this body of literature, most of which was intimately linked to the infancy and adolescence of Afrikaner nationalism, one finds certain consistent themes but also key inconsistencies. Most obviously, in very general terms the Voortrekkers are depicted in a heroic light as stalwart pioneers, while the majority of indigenous Africans are treacherous villains. The British colonial administration is invariably faulted for making conditions unbearable for many Boers, especially those in the Eastern Cape who came into conflict with Xhosa who resisted their settlement in that region. Concomitantly, the Boers of the Cape are seen as victims of British maladministration. In this streamlined rendition of early nineteenth-century history, never is a word said about the majority of Boers who chose not to join the Great Trek and in many cases thrived by staying behind and building up their farms or purchasing for a song acreages which prospective emigrants felt compelled to sell on short notice in a buyers' market. In all of these respects, the novelists in question were generally singing in tune with the authors of the nonfictional representations of the Great Trek which we considered in Chapter II.

Yet there are equally obvious differences in these novels, not least with regard to nuances in the characterisation of the Voortrekkers. It should be stressed that one cannot trace a crescendo in the lionising of these pioneers; it was not a case of the nineteenth-century authors in question depicting them as fallible but the later writers magnifying their virtues while remaining silent about their weaknesses. In most of these books one can find chinks in the armour of Afrikanerdom; indeed, in some cases authors refer to such attributes as jealousy and inflexibility in interpersonal relations as endemic traits of the ethnic group. Probably Erasmus's *Twee Voortrekkertjies* contains the most idealised heroic portrait of the Voortrekkers, and there, as I have emphasised elsewhere, it is clearly didactic. It is also the novel in which the attributes of individual leaders receive the most emphasis. In her *Die Wit Kraai*, which was unquestionably published to coincide with the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938, De Villiers allowed that

the emigrating Boers were an imperfect lot, although as we have seen she treated documentable history as malleable to minimise the foibles of her protagonist. When one reads Cloete's *Turning Wheels* from a disinterested viewpoint and juxtaposes its mixed portrayal of the Voortrekkers with those which are featured in most of the Dutch and Afrikaans novels about the Great Trek, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Afrikaners of the late 1930s who reacted to Cloete and his book with such intense hostility were either unaware of the fact that his depiction was not particularly deprecating (apart from his comment about the taboo subject of interracial sexual relations, a subject to which we shall return in Chapters IX and X), or that their hostility stemmed in large measure from the fact that *Turning Wheels* was written outside the ethnic laager of Afrikanerdom.

Notes

1. Bloemfontein: De Nationale Pers Beperkt, 1920.

2. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1935.

3. Frederick Hale, "The Heroic Motif in Two Afrikaans Children's Novels about the Great Trek", *Die Kultuurhistorikus/The Cultural Historian*, XIV, no. 1 (June 1999), pp. 32-57, and "Voortrekker Values for Afrikaans Youth in Pieter van der Merwe Erasmus's *Twee Voortrekkertjies*", *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans*, VI, no. 1 (June 1999), pp. 48-62.

4. Andree-Jeanne Tötemeyer, "The Racial Element in Afrikaans Children's and Youth Literature" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1984), p. 57.

5. "The Fountain-head of Dutch Fictional Reconstructions of the Great Trek: J. Hendrik van Balen's *De Landverhuizers*", *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans* VII, no. 1 (June 2000), pp. 56-73.

6. F.A. van Jaarsveld, "Van Oordt, Jan Willem Gerbrand", *Dictionary of South African Biography*, V (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1987), pp. 819-820.

7. Siegfried Huigen, "Het verminkte beeld en de verscholen teksten: episoden uit de Zuidafrikaanse (literatuur)geschiedenis", *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans*, II, no. 2 (December 1995), p. 17.

8. P.J. Nienaber, *D'Arbez as skrywer* (Pretoria: Firma J.H. de Bussy, 1936), p. 53.

9. Siegfried Huigen, *De weg naar Monomotapa. Nederlandstalige representaties van geografische, historische en sociale werkelijkheden in Zuid-Afrika* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), p. 100.

10. Alba Bouwer, "Rothmann, Maria Elizabeth (M.E.R.)", in C.J. Beyers (ed.), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, V (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1987), pp. 661-662.

11. Tötemeyer, "The Racial Element in Afrikaans Children's and Youth Literature", p. 52.

12. Anna de Villiers, *Barrevoets oor Drakensberg* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1975), unpaginated Inleiding.

13. R.P. Pace, "Hans Dons De Lange— Martyr or Murderer?" *Codicillus*, XIII, no. 1 (1972), p. 46.

14. "Criminal Sessions", *Natal Witness*, 25 January 1861, p. 2.

15. *Natal Witness*, 4 January 1861, pp. 2-3.

16. *Natal Witness*, 8 March 1861, p. 5.

Chapter IV

Sympathetic English Reconstructions of the Great Trek

While the genesis and nurturing of the general myth of the heroic Voortrekkers can be traced in large measure to their descendants such as Gustav Preller, it was not an exclusively Afrikaans product in either historiography (as we have already seen) or imaginative literature. Indeed, during the early and mid-1930s, two Anglophone novelists, one an Englishman and the other an American Cantabrigian, wrote fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek in which they by no means painted all its participants in rosy colours but nevertheless incorporated segments of the well-established, laudatory image of the Voortrekkers. These two works are *Far Enough* by Eugénie de Kalb and *They Seek a Country* by Francis Brett Young. The former novel was published in both London and New York in 1935, while Brett Young's came out in the English capital and that American metropolis two years later. The timing of the publication of both novels, especially *They Seek a Country*, suggests a conscious effort to capitalise on the increasing publicity which the historical event in question was receiving as plans for its commemoration unfolded in the Union of South Africa and were being announced in Britain. This is not to suggest, however, that De Kalb and Brett Young wrote exclusively for pecuniary reasons or that the timing of their books compromised their quality as fictional art. Despite patent weaknesses, especially in *Far Enough*, both novels have much to commend them and deserved the critical accolades they received.

In the present chapter we shall focus much of our attention on how De Kalb and BrettYoung presented what they believed were the causes of the Great Trek and how these two authors represented their various Voortrekker and other Afrikaans-speaking characters. Secondarily, we shall also consider the images of the colonial British in southern Africa. In accord with our commitment to historical criticism, we shall relate the creation of these two novels to the context in which they were written, especially with regard to De Kalb's perception of race relations in the Union of South Africa.

The Genesis of *Far Enough*

De Kalb's *Far Enough* was the first noteworthy fictional reconstruction of the Great Trek written in English for adults. Although fairly widely reviewed on both sides of the Atlantic and

also distributed in South Africa, it does not appear to have made a significant impact on novelists who subsequently wrote about the Boer migration of the 1830s and 1840s, particularly Francis Brett Young and Stuart Cloete. In fact, Brett Young's sympathetic biographer, his widow Jessica Brett Young, asserted decades later that he believed he had written the first novel of the Great Trek, and she did not betray any cognizance of De Kalb's work.[1] Whether Cloete, who undertook to write his own romance about that event at approximately the time *Far Enough* appeared, was aware of it cannot be readily ascertained. In any case, nothing in his *Turning Wheels* necessarily indicates reliance on *Far Enough*. Yet even if De Kalb's novel was an isolated book which neither of these men read, it still merits attention for purposes of comparison and contrast. De Kalb's national background, as we shall see shortly, differed markedly from those of Brett Young and Cloete, as did her extensive research in the Union of South Africa. A consideration of *Far Enough*, focussing on both its unique features and those it shared with other fiction about the Great Trek, helps us to understand why De Kalb's work occasionally won the praise of Afrikaners while especially *Turning Wheels* was almost invariably a target of their wrath.

De Kalb candidly related in an "Introductory Note" how she initially became interested in the Great Trek and proceeded to do historical research on this subject. An American by birth, she received a Bachelor of Arts in English at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1918 and, following several periods of illness, elected to pursue post-graduate studies in Elizabethan literature and history at Girton College, the University of Cambridge, beginning in 1922.[2] De Kalb had gained enough self-confidence by the 1925 to contribute an article about the Elizabethan author Christopher Marlowe to *The Times Literary Supplement*.[3] Again illness interrupted her research, but in late 1928 she successfully defended her thesis titled "An Elucidation of the Death of Christopher Marlowe, through an Examination of the Lives and Interests of Certain of His Associates". De Kalb was awarded the degree the following year, thereby becoming the first *alumna* of her well-regarded undergraduate *alma mater* to obtain a doctorate at Cambridge.[4]

During her years of residence and research in England and Scotland in the 1920s, De Kalb encountered many South African students, the majority of them Afrikaners. Some of these fellow aliens in the United Kingdom were accompanied by their mothers, who afforded her greater insight into the collective historical memory of a previous Afrikaans generation. While socialising with her South African acquaintances, De Kalb "grasped the fact that there was a story of a people in South Africa that had never been told in fiction. This was the Great Trek of the nineteenth century–the stuff of which sagas are made". The topic, she believed, had fallen into her lap without requiring any particular initiative on her part. Whether De Kalb considered

writing about the Voortrekker migration in connection with its anticipated centenary is not known. Preliminary plans for that event were already being laid in Afrikaans cultural circles during the latter half of the 1920s. In any case, in November 1928, a fortnight after her thesis had been accepted, this American doctorand boarded a ship bound for Cape Town. She would remain in the Union of South Africa for two years, learning Afrikaans and pursuing research on the Great Trek.[5]

The manner in which De Kalb conducted her investigation evidently made a profound impact on her ethnic perspective and sympathies. (It has not been possible to ascertain whether she was predominantly of Dutch descent, as her surname suggests.) Using Pretoria as her headquarters but also doing research in Cape Town and Somerset East, she gained the confidence and interviewed large numbers of descendants of the Voortrekkers and recorded much of the oral tradition that had been handed down from their grandparents. "Only by hearing hundreds of such [accounts] could I learn what their minds were like, and what kinds of things could or could not have happened", De Kalb recalled confidently. Her informants not only related family histories but also accompanied their American guest to many sites of historical significance, including, with great physical difficulty, the scene of the Piet Retief massacre of 1838. Archival research supplemented face-to-face encounters with the Voortrekker legacy.[6] De Kalb did not describe the details of this, however, nor did she directly reveal at that time whether she had read the works of Preller and other historians of the Great Trek or whether she had viewed the film of 1916, *De Voortrekkers/Winning a Continent*, the script of which Preller had written.

After completing her stint in South Africa, De Kalb returned to the United States of America and settled in New York, where she wrote *Far Enough* in passable British English. While doing so, De Kalb revealed how deeply she had drunk at the well of South African white supremacy, for which she became an unabashed if small-scale apologist. One key event that triggered her defensiveness was a critical, full-page review which P.W. Wilson wrote of Jan H. Hofmeyr's *South Africa* in *The New York Times* in 1932. Commenting from an American liberal viewpoint, Wilson had voiced a critical attitude towards Hofmeyr's understanding of segregationist racial policies in the interwar period.[7] This riled the outspoken young literary scholar, who in a scathing letter to *The New York Times* declared that Wilson had committed numerous "blunders" owing to his "ignorance of facts which are commonplaces of South African life and history" and expressed her fear that readers without personal familiarity with the issues under discussion would thus be "seriously misled".[8] De Kalb then took it upon herself to enlighten benighted American minds about race relations in the Union of South Africa and its antecedent colonies and republics.

In three columns of finely printed text, De Kalb explained *inter alia* her conviction that in twentieth-century South Africa "the native question" was "as vexed and difficult a question as faces any white people anywhere on the globe at present". She feared that mishandling it could "mean the ultimate extinction of white South Africa". De Kalb revealed that in addition to two years of first-hand observations her sources included works by such historians as Cory and Theal (whose nineteenth-century works were by then quite dated), Hendrik Cloete (the British and Dutch-educated lawyer and politician in Cape Town whose lectures about the early history of the Great Trek we considered in Chapter II), and unspecified archivalia in London and Cape Town. Conspicuously absent from her fonts of wisdom were texts written from non-white perspectives and studies by contemporary South Africans who were critical of the segregationist policies of the Hertzog administration. De Kalb gave every indication of being immersed in a bygone era.[9]

Much of De Kalb's commentary dealt with interracial labour relations in South Africa. She vehemently denied that slavery there had been analogous to its manifestation in the American South. Revealing something of the limits of her historical expertise, De Kalb generalised that "the natives of South Africa were never slaves, but, like our Indians, dealt in raid and massacre upon a receding frontier". Her next sentence illuminates further her perception of race relations in the Eastern Cape that helped to precipitate the Great Trek: "Cattle being then as now the standard of native wealth, the proximity of a stock-farming frontiersman was irresistible".[10] As we shall see, this sentiment manifests itself repeatedly in what several Boers voice in *Far Enough*.

True to well-entrenched Afrikaans rhetorical tradition, De Kalb also took the London Missionary Society to task, defending the hostility of early nineteenth-century Boers to that organisation which evangelised members of various ethnic groups during the early years of British hegemony at the Cape. Arguing that the renowned Scottish missionary David Livingstone was essentially an imperialist, she insisted that "the Boers have never regarded Livingstone as a missionary of God; and certainly he was the great forerunner of Rhodes. He kept the trade-route open in defiance of all just restrictions". De Kalb thought it wholly understandable that the Voortrekkers had formally condemned contact with the London Missionary Society.[11]

Near the conclusion of her lengthy letter, De Kalb sought to describe the contemporary cultural state of black South Africans. Her portrayal of them was thoroughly condescending and ethnocentric. She declared that the native reserves existed not for those indigenes who had come into significant contact with European civilisation but rather "for the irresponsible Kaffir, the native, of whichever stock, who is still one or two removes from pure barbarism". De Kalb

vehemently denied that black mine workers were "uprooted and exploited"; they merely migrated to industrial and urban areas to earn higher wages than they were paid on farms. Regardless of his place of employment, however, "the native in South Africa is the only man who does not work for a living, but for extras", she generalised. "A few months' work, and they retire to the reservations, where the women do all the work, except the making of illicit beer for orgies–man's work". The myth of the insouciant, marginally prosperous black flies high in De Kalb's summary: "Having to pay only a nominal head-tax, they are better off than the poor whites; and have–there is the danger in talk of equality–no sense of economic responsibility. The Kaffir can and does leave any job the minute he does not care for it". Unquestionably, she perceived a broad threat to white South Africa in the cultural limbo in which the country's millions of blacks found themselves: "They have left behind the tribal checks of their prehistoric laws. They have not acquired our checks. In spite of idealism, it is highly doubtful if they are living in the twentieth century. They have just reached the beginning of the Christian era".[12]

Narrative and Plot Summary

It should be remarked at the outset that *Far Enough* is a generally readable if quite unrefined work of fiction which relates much about the Great Trek and events in the history of Afrikanerdom bracketing it but that De Kalb's text is replete with flaws which betray its author's inexperience with the novelist's pen. Her gallery of unevenly developed characters, chiefly within the Van der Weg clan, is unnecessarily confusing, notwithstanding the inclusion of a poorly drawn genealogical table as a one-page appendix. Leaps forward in the chronologically linear narrative compound the difficulty of following the course of historical events. In many places the dialogue is equally bewildering; one struggles to know which unspecified Van der Weg or other Boer is voicing his or her opinion of fellow Voortrekkers, their British pursuers, San intruders who visit their farms clandestinely at night, or non-white servants. De Kalb's inconsistent attempts to convey the cadence of Afrikaans speech in English add little to the credibility of her text and at times merely sound quaint. *Tot siens*, for instance, is rendered "till seeing" (p. 215), and with regard to Chief Moselikatz, Kurt van der Weg declares, "But his people are the Matabele–not?" (p. 55) De Kalb's occasional use of Afrikaans loanwords is not, of course, unique, although one wonders what reproducing the untranslated adjective *vervlukste* (p. 178) adds to her narrative.

Strictly speaking, *Far Enough* is not merely a novel of the Great Trek, but the saga of a family which participated in that migration. The chronological span of De Kalb's novel encompasses much of the nineteenth century, although within this framework disproportionate emphasis is placed on the 1830s and early 1840s. In this sense, therefore, *Far Enough* includes a detailed treatment of the Great Trek, and the chapters which focus on that event are among the meatiest, while those dealing with the subsequent course of the characters after their settlement in the Transvaal are, by comparison, exceedingly lean.

Within this broad framework, De Kalb attempts an epic portrayal of the history of the Voortrekkers, a goal which won the respect of some critics but arguably proved the undoing of her novel because her reach exceeds her grasp of the historical material and her concentration on one clan proves too narrow to cover the canvas she wishes to paint. In brief, *Far Enough* is the story of the Van der Weg family, particularly the woman Teda (*née* Buurman) who eventually becomes its matriarch with numerous great-grandchildren, from the 1820s until 1900. A Capetonian of partly Norwegian descent, she marries Kurt van der Weg in the early 1920s and resides with him and their children on the Van der Weg farm in the Eastern Cape until they join the Great Trek and proceed initially over the Drakensberg to the vicinities of Weenen and Pietermaritzburg in Natal. The British annexation of the short-lived Republic of Natalia in 1843, and particularly the perceived unwillingness of these colonisers to respect Boer hegemony, prompts the Van der Wegs to trek anew, this time by way of Potchefstroom to a farm which they establish near Rustenburg. Kurt's relatively early death resisting the British annexation of Natal causes one of his equally embittered sons, Aatga, to move to centre stage in De Kalb's plot. Eventually a third generation of Van der Wegs inherits a generous portion of the attitudes and memories of their forefathers while, to Teda's dismay, these children of the Great Trek and the *veld* have no appreciation of the topography and life she once knew in and near Cape Town. She is well acquainted with grief, having lost her husband as well as several children and grandchildren to disease and military violence. In tracing the course of the clan, De Kalb briefly touches on such events as the Sand River Convention and the First Anglo-Boer War to provide a historical framework which both provides known milestones and reinforces Boer hostility to the British as a determining factor in shaping what she clearly perceives as a pillar of the former group's collective personality. The chronological span thus stretches from more than a decade before the Great Trek got underway until the Second Anglo-Boer War or, in terms of the ethnic conflicts which give the plot much of its structure, from the early years of British hegemony at the Cape until the British occupation of Pretoria, the capital of the South African Republic. Flight from

British interference in the lives of independence-loving Boers forms a central axis in this story around which much of the plot rotates as one generation of van der Bergs after another seeks autonomy. Strictly speaking, they never really find it. The farm which some of them eventually establish near Rustenburg in the western Transvaal, optimistically named *Vergenoeg* as an expression of their hope that they finally have placed sufficient distance between them and their British tormenters, proves to lie within the grasp of occupation troops in 1900. Ancient Teda, then in her nineties, dies with her dream of a fully-fledged, unthreatened Boer state unfulfilled. In the closing paragraphs, one of her young great-grandsons, Pietie van der Weg, is shot during the occupation but is apparently not dead. De Kalb thus ends *Far Enough* a bit enigmatically, leaving open the question of whether the youngest generation of the descendants of the fleeing Voortrekkers will survive and realise their ancestors' dreams of Afrikaans self-determination.

The last several chapters are quite rushed and narratively superficial, standing in bold contrast to much of the earlier text of *Far Enough*. To the extent that De Kalb's novel can be considered an epic, therefore, it is a quite uneven one which arguably could have been strengthened considerably through a more detailed consideration of events during the latter half of the nineteenth century to cast additional light on the adjustment of the Voortrekkers to their new environments.

In places, *Far Enough* reads like an attempt to convey details of South African history which De Kalb believes American and British readers need to be taught. For instance, in one of several patently didactic passages De Kalb carefully informs readers that Piet Retief and his men were murdered by Dingaan on "the sixth of February, 1838" (p. 104). Certain details of the subsequent Battle of Blood River also receive their due in De Kalb's historical narrative (pp. 141-142). She expounds on how late fifteenth-century Portuguese explorers gave the name *Natal* to the coastal region where they landed (p. 195). Regarding the Doppers within the Dutch Reformed Church, a young immigrant from the Netherlands explains that they are analogous to the "Old Lights" in Scottish Presbyterianism (p. 203), a comparison whose meaningfulness was probably limited almost exclusively to a relatively small number of British readers.

Causes of the Great Trek

Probably owing in generous measure to the personal nature of her research and strong reliance on Afrikaans oral tradition, De Kalb finds the *primus motor* of the Great Trek in the misdirected and unjust British administration of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, particularly

its insensitivity *vis-à-vis* the Boers. Indeed, in her "Introductory Note" preceding the text of *Far Enough*, De Kalb states explicitly that the Voortrekkers were "sick at heart to escape English rule" and that this intense discontent prompted them to seek better lives elsewhere.[13] She expounds on this in her narrative. Beginning on the first page of the novel, in a chapter bluntly titled "A Hanging", De Kalb sets a stridently anti-British tone by describing the executions at Slachter's Nek in 1816 and having several of her characters voice Boer attitudes towards the colonial administration. The rebellion in which the condemned men have taken part has been "against the unpatriarchal government of a country whose tongue many of them did not speak, and whose traditions none of them understood" (pp. 2-3). When the ropes break and four of the men initially survive their hanging, the commanding officer coldly rejects the demands of the crowd to spare their lives. "I have no power to pardon", he declares dispassionately (pp. 4-5).

Much of the resentment of British colonial rule focusses on the issue of slavery. Its abolition is mentioned repeatedly in *Far Enough*, invariably in ways that solidify anti-British attitudes. From the viewpoint of some Boers, hypocrisy reigns. "Always it is the English who entreat, oh, so persuasively, for a permit to sell us more slaves, and the government allows it–how many hundred a year?" Teda recalls hearing her father complain. He had argued that critics of slavery should "see the thousands of miserable, crazed creatures dying in the holds of English ships! It is kind to buy them if they can be of use" (p. 12). Furthermore, the elder Buurman had rationalised, the number of freed slaves employed in Cape Town was evidence that humane treatment and the eventual liberation of involuntary servants were entirely possible (p. 12).

No less significantly, De Kalb's future Voortrekkers are thoroughly disgusted with the ineffectiveness of the colonial administration in defending farmers in the Cape from raids by indigenes. After the major unrest of 1834, Kurt discusses with Teda the fact that many of their neighbours are planning to trek and defends their decision on the grounds of official indifference to their plight. "It is as Piet Retief has written in his manifesto, the government does not give us law and order", he generalises. Consequently, burdensome vigilante action has become necessary to respond to crime on a private basis: "We go on commando for government reprisals; eight-ten months away from our farms, and at our own cost" (p. 33). Adding insult to injury, after the Van der Wegs' livestock is taken in a raid, they find it at a government fort but are told by an officious commanding officer that the animals would be sold at auction in order to reimburse the government for expenses incurred in recapturing them (p. 21).

A secondary factor which De Kalb underscores as alienating future Voortrekkers from the life they have enjoyed in the Cape is evidently the London Missionary Society, although

she does not mention that organisation by name. Again and again, pivotal Boer characters voice emphatically anti-missionary attitudes in the first few chapters of *Far Enough*. Particularly antagonising are the missionaries' demands that slaves receive humane treatment, a position which the farmers in question perceive as a threat to their familiar pattern of racial supremacy and exploitation of cheap labour. In the first chapter, Pieter van der Weg sets the tone for this reaction by allowing that "in the old days there were good missionaries" (though he does not name or otherwise identify them), "but that [Johannes] van der Kemp–squatting in blankets with a Hottentot wife . . . teaching our servants to be saucy and idle, haling us before a magistrate every time we give one that is lazy a clout". This patriarch of the Van der Weg clan succinctly voices a widespread attitude: "The missionaries are our bane" (pp. 8-9). In the following chapter his son Kurt expresses a similar sentiment, insisting with regard to the "Hottentots" that "the missionaries feed them and teach them laziness", and that an aversion to physical labour has been the inevitable consequence (p. 12). This young Boer sings the same tune in Chapter Four when he comments on the unwillingness of that ethnic group to serve white farmers as readily as had been the case: "If he starves, he can always run and lie at the feet of the missionaries. He is a good Christian . . . when his belly is hollow" (p. 34). Hostile memories of missionaries endure in the van der Weg mentality from one generation to another and remain linked to the Boer desire for independence. Even after settling in the Transvaal, Teda blames them for encouraging disrespect for both the law and, obliquely, white economic domination. "Always missionaries!" she laments loudly. "Why do they not preach of God and leave us alone?" (p. 205)

De Kalb's Portrayal of the Voortrekkers

De Kalb's heavy reliance on Afrikaans oral tradition, with which she supplemented whatever written histories of the Great Trek she read, unquestionably shaped to a great degree her perception of the Voortrekkers and, in turn, her own recreation of those historical pioneers. Not surprisingly, her general depiction of them is largely favourable, at least when assayed with the touchstone of Afrikaans values of the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, however, De Kalb seeks with considerable success to avoid the quasi-hagiographic traditions which burdened earlier presentations of the Voortrekkers. Accordingly, she paints a variegated gallery of nineteenth-century Boers who evince a conflicting amalgam of traits as bravery, cunning, aloofness, ethnic group loyalty, fraternal strife, tenderness, kindness, ethnic hatred, and industriousness. In the same

text, De Kalb offers numerous narratorial generalisations about this ethnic group as a whole. The overall impression of the Boers which emerges from *Far Enough* is thus relatively complex and cannot be reduced to the conventional stereotypes of them which flatten many other fictional and nonfictional treatments. In this respect, De Kalb's work, regardless whether such subsequent novelists of the Great Trek as Francis Brett Young and Stuart Cloete actually read it, serves as a forerunner of the equally heterogeneous portrayal of Voortrekkers in other novels of the 1930s. We shall therefore briefly examine both major characteristics of De Kalb's central characters and her authorial comments about Boers in general.

In her "Introductory Note", De Kalb emphasises that the collective memory of the Afrikaners, especially with regard to the history of their dispersion in Southern Africa during the nineteenth century, contributed heavily to their self-understanding and, by extension, their relations with other ethnic groups. "Their history is meat and drink to them", she declares (vi). De Kalb employs the potency of this popular sense of history to considerable effect in her narrative. Again and again, displaced Boers are shown to be captive to their inability to forgive and forget. They recall endlessly the injustice of Slachter's Nek, the ineptness and condescending cultural insensitivity of British administrators in the Cape, the British rape of Natal, and other grievances they have endured. They remain chained to the past until the plot reaches its gloomy end in 1900. De Kalb nowhere exonerates the British for their conduct *vis-à-vis* the Boers, but she clearly faults many of the latter for their inability to proceed beyond that admittedly persistently tense interethnic relationship. This, it seems, is a key component of her understanding of their tragedy.

Christianity in the Dutch Reformed tradition runs strong in *Far Enough* and intersects with several other motifs, such as the consciousness of God-given destiny on the Great Trek and the racism of the Voortrekkers. The religious demeanour of the Van der Wegs appears to vary greatly, with some members of the family, such as the impetuous Johannes, evincing little enthusiasm for Christian spirituality, while at the opposite pole Teda's thoughts and actions are governed to a considerable degree by her childhood anchoring in Dutch Reformed piety in Cape Town. Part of her religious life, to be sure, is nostalgic. While uprooted and migrating on the Great Trek, she longs for the intimate ecclesiastical environment of her youth. "Just once before I die, to sit again in my own church, shut into my father's pew", Teda wishes (p. 72). She seeks to nurture the spiritual formation of her own offspring by reading a children's Bible to them (p. 97). Their own reading lessons come from the Bible in the absence of secular books. De Kalb reproduces what had long been part of the English stereotype of Boer religion and would become a *Leitmotiv* in fictional constructions of Voortrekker religiosity by emphasising the primacy of

the Old Testament while virtually ignoring the New. Teda's children find Joshua, with its accounts of the violent conquest of Canaan, to be their favourite book in the Scriptures (p. 146). An element of sternness also apparently permeates the piety of the Van der Weg home *en route* to Natal. At one point, a son, Aatga, believes he must hurry home, because if he arrived too late for family prayers, his father "would assuredly thrash him" (p. 91).

Teda's keen consciousness of Biblical motifs inspires her perception of the Great Trek as she participates in it. She perceives Piet Retief as a latter-day Moses (p. 50), while her husband casts Potgieter in that postfigurative rôle (p. 57). Continuing the Exodus motif, Teda believes that "we are like that, . . . driven to seek the wilderness in despair". She finds solace in her conviction that God is accompanying them through the ordeal of migration (p. 48). Preparing to ford a river near Bethlehem in what would become the Orange Free State, Teda likens the experience to crossing the Jordan and finds comfort in the expectation that her as yet unborn ninth child "would take his first steps into their Promised Land" (p. 66).

A third overarching trait of De Kalb's Boers is their sense of moral superiority to the various kinds of non-whites with whom they interact, usually in disharmonious ways. The manner in which she expresses these attitudes is arguably problematical, as Boer opinions of indigenous and Coloured peoples are generally voiced by members of the Van der Weg family. The extent to which De Kalb shared these views during the 1930s is not fully clear. In any case, censorious expressions of non-white peoples are legion in *Far Enough*. A representative sample will illustrate De Kalb's understanding of this crucial dimension of nineteenth-century Boer racism.

De Kalb describes the San, who are invariably called the "Bushmen" in *Far Enough*, in generally though not universally negative terms. She refers to the vulnerability of Voortrekkers' property to "the filching fingers of scattered Bushmen, who coveted links and scraps of wagon-iron as well as the edible thongs" (p. 46). Candidly expressing her twentieth-century perspective, she adds that these "pitiful little troglodytes" are "the only true aboriginals of South Africa" and that they had been victims of ethnic migrations since the seventeenth century, trapped between black Africans migrating southward and the expansion of white settlers in the Cape. Apparently reproducing uncritically generalisations heard from her Afrikaans informants, De Kalb distinguishes between those who have been "tamed by friendliness" and become "the most honest servants that South Africans ever knew", while for "wild Bushmen", by contrast, only "a ball and powder" are appropriate (p. 47). The San continue to menace the Van der Wegs and their fellow Boers after they settle in Natal; while Zulus squat on their newly established farms, "Bushmen from the painted caverns of the mountains did not fear to maraud, but feasted much on horse-flesh

and mutton" (p. 171). Teda relates that the spoor of the latter people have been found near their out-buildings, an observation which prompts her son Aatga to wonder, "How can a man live here?" (p. 189)

Black Africans fare much worse in *Far Enough*. They are little more than savage marauders who raid the Van der Weg farm in the Eastern Cape in 1834, killing one of Teda's and Kurt's sons in the process, and afford brutal resistance to the Voortrekkers who encroach on their territories. Playing on a recurring theme in the Afrikaans oral and written traditions of popular history, De Kalb dwells in horrifically graphic terms on the resulting butchery. After one of many raids on a wagon train, "not only the bodies of men weltered among dark patches, but of women, their bonnets strained from their wimpled throats, their breasts mutilated, and of babies beside wagon wheels bespattered with their brains" (p. 116). Elsewhere, a slaughtered mother lies with "one breast . . . cut off, and at the bloody breast was laid a baby of a few days old" (p. 121). Dingaan, as well, is depicted as a bloodthirsty, treacherous individual (pp. 83, 103), although De Kalb mercifully spares readers a detailed narration of the massacre of Piet Retief's negotiating party.

The Voortrekkers' attitudes towards indigenous black Africans are accordingly hostile and censorious. In Natal during the late 1830s, Kurt van der Weg asserts in a conversation with a fellow Boer that "all kaffirs are liars" (p. 75), and decades later his widow, Teda, generalises that "all blacks are thievish; it is their nature" (p. 197). Immeasurably more revealing than these categorical indictments is De Kalb's explanation of the rhetorical support which brutal Afrikaans racism finds in religious belief, particularly in the crassly simplistic Biblicism which she accuses the Voortrekkers of espousing. Evincing no appreciation of the concept of due process of law, Aatga summarily executes two Zulus whom he apprehends stealing his cattle. He explains that "a native is not a man wholly" and finds his justification for this evaluation in an unmistakable allusion to Joshua 9:21, where subjugated Canaanites are to become hewers of wood and drawers of water. True to form, Aatga blames his European ethnic rivals for upsetting the natural order of things: "When he [*i.e.* the African] is made great, as the English make him contrary to the Word of God, he becomes evil" (p. 194). De Kalb thus merges her themes of the Boers' religiosity, racism, and animosity to British colonial missionary endeavours.

Fourthly, De Kalb returns repeatedly to the theme of *broedertwis* in the history of the Boers, both during the Great Trek and in the decades bracketing that event. This challenges the tenet that the process of migrating from the Cape to the Orange Free State, Natal, and the Transvaal was itself a unifying force which played a key rôle in moulding the Boers into a nation against

their common foes, particularly the British who compelled them to trek and the black Africans who resisted their incursions.

Practically from the outset, the Voortrekkers of *Far Enough* are to a considerable degree a disharmonious lot playing their tunes of life in differing keys. Much of the early strife arises from conflicting opinions of who will lead them on their errand into the wilderness. Some of the Van der Wegs enter the verbal fray. Kurt cannot "foresee a leader" and fears that the imperious Hendrik "Potgieter is too ruthless; he will quarrel with everyone". Piet Retief is his personal choice (p. 35). His brother Johannes, however, has briefly served Potgieter as a scout in the Transvaal and derides Retief, who according to Kurt "works day and night that our laws and organisation be complete and acceptable" as a threat to individual freedom. The two siblings trade recriminations and nearly come to blows over the matter before their mother, Teda, intervenes (pp. 61-63).

When various groups of Voortrekkers congregate at Winburg, in effect a staging area in what would become the Orange Free State, it becomes obvious that the so-called "United Laagers" are in fact disunited. Tempers boil over in trying circumstances, and patience with attempts to provide a measure of governance run counter to the intensely independent psyches of many migrants. Like some of his counterparts in both *Far Enough* and *They Seek a Country*, the free-spirited Johannes van der Weg remonstrates against a rule that hunters must secure permits. He longs to live in an area where there are no English - and no Piet Retief (p. 59).

After many of the Voortrekkers reach Natal at the end of the 1830s, the discord continues, although De Kalb lays much of the indirect blame for this on the doorstep of the British who are intent on incorporating the short-lived Republic of Natalia into the Empire. Again the Van der Wegs are in the thick of it, particularly Kurt, who nearly becomes implicated in a plot by uncompromising Boers to assassinate Andries Pretorius, who advocates negotiating with the British rather than engaging in armed resistance. At an assembly of the *Volksraad* in Pietermaritzburg, Pretorius expresses chagrin at having to acknowledge that "among our people dwells such baseness that they will murder their fellow-countrymen in the beautiful name of liberty" (p. 185).

Like Eric Anderson Walker and other historians of the Great Trek, De Kalb calls attention to the fact that an almost universal background in the Dutch Reformed Church did not provide a comprehensively unifying religious bond amongst the Voortrekkers. In *Far Enough*, divided opinions of the Doppers, *i.e.* the members of what was then a loosely organised, rural movement within the DRC which opposed many forms of modernisation, provide an element of religious tension. To the relatively urbane Teda, who dreams of returning to the Great Church in Cape Town, the Doppers are a strange lot "who cut their hair under a bowl" and are "afraid of progress"

(p. 200). After settling in the Transvaal, she comments that one member of the eventually prominent Kruger family "is a Dopper and eats off painted tin plates" (p. 203). Two of her daughters discuss this movement briefly in a conversation about finding a husband for one of them. "I shall not marry a Dopper!" she vows indignantly. "They are not of the State Church". Her sister, however, assures her that according to their teacher Wessels from The Netherlands, the Doppers are no less Calvinist than anyone else; they are "only stricter". She dismisses objections that Wessels is a Dutchman or "cheesehead" and declares, "I like Doppers and–cheeseheads" (p. 207). This exchange provides one of the rare elements of deliberate humour in *Far Enough*.

As an unconscious contribution to South African literary history of particular relevance to the present study, the Van der Wegs also dispute the loyalty of the Cloete family of Cape Town. There is no reason to believe that when De Kalb was writing *Far Enough*, it should be emphasised, she had heard of Stuart Cloete. Yet by the 1930s his forebears had been a prominent family in and near Cape Town for nearly 300 years, and during the first half of the nineteenth century, when the British presence was growing there, some Cloetes were collaborating conspicuously with the colonial administration. The extent to which they were still loyal Boers becomes an issue to Kurt van der Weg, who insists that "they are *pure* English in their feelings" (p. 101). His Capetonian spouse, however, protests that "the Cloetes were friends of my father. They are our oldest strain. They are thoroughly Dutch, too–like Sir John Truter. They are not our reasons to trek. They are city-bred. They send their sons to Holland to study. But they are proud to be old Dutch" (p. 101). The suspicion of the Cloetes accompanies the Van der Wegs to Natal, where Hendrik (or Henry) Cloete is serving as a special British commissioner. A Capetonian by birth, he has studied law at Lincoln's Inn in London and, as indicated in Chapter II, in 1843 was sent by the British colonial governor of the Cape, Sir George Napier, to negotiate a settlement with the *Volksraad* in Pietermaritzburg. (A year earlier, a younger brother, Colonel Josias Cloete, had headed the British force that occupied Port Natal and received the submission of the Volksraad.) The irate Aatga van der Weg is troubled by and disillusioned with the high-level co-operation of the Cloetes with the imperial powers that have dominated part of his life. Their conduct obviously runs counter to his personal animosity to the British (p. 176). He declares to his wife that "Cloete is altogether an Englishman" for advocating acceptance of the British annexation of Natal in exchange for a promise not to press their desire for territory beyond the Drakensberg (p. 186). Looking ahead to Chapter X, it is surprising that given all the hostile attention which Afrikaner nationalists paid Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels* in 1937, apparently no-one at that time broached the issue of his ancestors' collaboration with the British.

That De Kalb's Boers repeatedly voice such unsentimental judgments of other ethnic groups is not at all surprising in light of their general lack of compassion. Even Teda van der Weg, who stands out as one of the less severe characters, has a tough emotional hide. Describing her general lack of expressed emotions late in life, De Kalb states that "she had always rejected sympathy more than most of her race" and notes that when retrospectively considering her difficult life as a migrating Christian mother, she spends her final days reading her Bible and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (p. 274).

De Kalb possibly sheds the greatest light on her perception of the incompatibility of the Boers and Zulus in Natal, and by extension the inevitable failure of the former's presence there, in an attempted synopsis of contrasts between these two people's cultures. Her theory merits quotation *in extenso*, not least because it virtually exonerates the Voortrekkers in Natal and seeks to present a milder image of them than they themselves often projected:

> So, across the valley of the Tugela, two eras in human development faced each other. Each judged the other by his own standards; a barbarous culture facing a patriarchal culture. If both had been predatory, or both agrarian, they might have found a working basis of understanding. But the Zulu gloried in war; the Boer abhorred it. To the one a warrior was a hero; to the other he was an assassin. Have I said that the Boers were a survival of that hard-bitten century, the eighteenth? They were more than a survival; they were an anachronism. They were the last of the folk-migrations. If you know this you will be better able to understand them. Rhythms of two thousand years ago couched in their beings; they were biblical. They were tough and gnarled like old stubborn things, and soft with queer childlike inadvertencies. They were like the twisted trunk of a hawthorne-tree on a blasted moor: full of thorns and superstition and tenacity, but with blossoms like moonshine and fruit like drops of blood. They were not heroes but folk (pp. 84-85).

Both De Kalb's unflattering portraits of and remarks about many Voortrekkers, together with her unveiled admiration of their perseverance in seeking autonomy despite decades of embittering tribulation and strained relations with both the British and various African ethnic groups, underscore the last point.

Francis Brett Young's *They Seek a Country*

As literary art, particularly as a fictional reconstruction of the Great Trek, Francis Brett Young's *They Seek a Country* represents a noteworthy advance over *Far Enough*. This is hardly surprising when one considers that De Kalb's novel was her first attempt at a book-length work of fiction, whereas by the mid-1930s Brett Young was a seasoned if hardly renowned novelist. One can point to the grace of his almost lyrical prose style, his broader yet less confusing gallery of characters, the plausibility of his plot, and the more coherent contextualisation of his story in both British and Southern African history as dimensions of this superiority.

Furthermore, when compared with Cloete's *Turning Wheels*, *They Seek a Country* also soars well above that neophyte work. One can arguably attribute the artistic disparity between these two books in part to the fact that Brett Young's reconstruction of the Great Trek was his twenty-fifth novel, whereas Cloete's was his first. Another factor may well have lain in the differing educational backgrounds of the two authors. Cloete had completed secondary school before marching off to war and, in the 1920s, pursued an agricultural career in the Transvaal before taking up the pen. Brett Young, by contrast, had been educated in medicine at the University of Birmingham and had practised in Devon before serving in the 2nd Rhodesian Regiment in Jan Smuts's campaign in East Africa during the First World War. In terms of such obvious indicators as his notably more extensive English vocabulary and tendency to make qualified statements rather than rash generalisations of the sort which frequently occur in *Turning Wheels*, he was unquestionably intellectually more polished than his younger counterpart. This also sets the two novels apart from each other. As indicated earlier, the two men reportedly wrote entirely independently of one another in the mid-1930s.

By his own account, given in an "Author's Note" appended to the text of *They Seek a Country*, Brett Young sought to present within a fictional framework historically accurate portrayals of living conditions in England during the first half of the nineteenth century and of the Great Trek. With regard to the latter, he relied heavily on unspecified historical treatments by George McCall Theal and George Cory as well as on John Bird's 1888 *Annals of Natal*. He acknowledged a "particular debt" to Eric Anderson Walker's survey of *The Great Trek*, the first edition of which had been published in 1934.[14]

For the purposes of the present study, with its emphasis on ethnic characterisation and the public consequences thereof, the most significant features of *They Seek a Country* are Brett Young's

depiction of the English and the Afrikaners at the time of the Great Trek. His novel was sold and reviewed in South Africa as well as in Britain and North America, but, despite some mild grumbling, it did not cause nearly the furore which *Turning Wheels* did. The contours of Cloete's representation of the Afrikaners who joined the migration stand out in even bolder relief when juxtaposed with Brett Young's.

Narrative and Plot Summary

Both geographically and chronologically, Brett Young casts a much broader net than Cloete and deals with *inter alia* the causes of the Great Trek, several of its most historically prominent participants, and segments of the trek into both Natal and the Transvaal. *They Seek a Country* is thus an epic treatment spanning approximately 640 relatively short pages which are divided into twenty-nine chapters. Brett Young adopts a generally linear narrative told from a conventional, omniscient narrator point of view. This allows him to weave together two strands into a fairly cohesive if not entirely seamless historical tapestry. The first of these begins in Book One, which encompasses eleven chapters gathered under the title "Fog over England". Brett Young describes social disparities in Britain, especially in the English Midlands, during the 1830s as the Industrial Revolution has created a disinherited proletariat which lives a hand-to-mouth existence at the mercy of the landed gentry and whose very modest economic basis, consisting partly of subsistence agriculture, is further threatened by enclosure acts which erode historic squatters' rights and grazing privileges. Exacerbating the predicament of the dispossessed further still, poaching laws protect the fauna which the wealthier members of society maintain, and a socially insensitive judiciary does not hesitate to impose the death penalty on those who infringe these statutes.

The central protagonist of *They Seek a Country*, John Oakley, is born into this economically dysfunctional society in the "sooty borough of Dulston" around 1816. His impoverished parents toil endlessly as nailmakers and exploit his labour in a failing effort to make ends meet. Never bonded to his explosive, vulgar father, Oakley is unofficially adopted by a pious uncle after the death of his kindly mother. From his father's brother he learns the cobbler's trade, acquires literacy, and becomes familiar with the rudiments of Christianity. The idealistic youth does not make genuine friends but nevertheless gains some acceptance amongst his peers and older workers, some of whom he seeks to aid by imparting literacy to them. He also attempts to alleviate their

plight when Parliament considers another enclosure bill which they believe will cause even greater economic hardship. Oakley even walks to London to plea their case before a Parliamentary committee but returns empty-handed.

At this point, the malevolent English judicial system enters the plot. Oakley naïvely accompanies two local poachers on a stormy night as they carry a bag of game birds across the property of a local gentleman. The three are apprehended, tried, and found guilty. The principal transgressor, who has a lengthy criminal record, is sentenced to death on the gallows, while the second, a peg-legged veteran of the Napoleonic Wars named George Dicketts, and Oakley are sentenced to "transportation", *i.e.* a lengthy sentence aboard a prison ship. Brett Young leaves little to the imagination in describing infernal conditions on board as the prisoners, often restricted by leg irons and existing on a thoroughly unappetising diet, are carried hither and yon in unmitigated squalor.

This hellish state of affairs continues for a few months until a plague breaks out on board as the vessel, the *Minerva*, approaches the Cape of Good Hope. Although its supply of water is running perilously low, it is turned away at Simon's Town and compelled to sail eastward for ten days along the Indian Ocean coast. Finally, at the mouth of the Bushman and Kariega Rivers south of Grahamstown, Oakley and Dicketts are among the volunteers who, under armed guard, row boats ashore and begin to fill casks with water. Before they can complete this arduous task, however, a fierce south-easter blows up, compelling the party to retreat to their boats. Because of Dicketts' disability, he and Oakley lag far behind the others. The two choose to flee and do so successfully. The following day they arrive, famished and exhausted, at a farm called Welgelegen which the family of Adrian Prinsloo has established on the Eastern Cape frontier some two decades earlier. The advent of the two English escapees occurs at the beginning of Book Two, "Storm over Africa".

Though hardly admirers of the English, the Prinsloos take in these two hapless souls, not knowing that they are fugitives from justice. One of their daughters, Lisbet, or Elisabeta, becomes increasingly fond of Oakley, who is slightly younger than she, and helps him in his recovery. The two Englishmen accept employment at Welgelegen as the Prinsloos and other Afrikaans families in the area grouse about the injustices they have endured at the hands of the British colonial administration, not least with regard to the abolition of slavery, and consider the merits of joining the Great Trek. Eventually they cast in their lot with the migration and become Voortrekkers bound for Natal. Oakley and Dicketts accompany them, as does another Briton, a middle-aged Scottish Presbyterian clergyman named Blair who has ministered to a

denominationally and ethnically diverse flock in the Eastern Cape, whose late wife was an Afrikaner, and who, like Oakley, is increasingly romantically interested in Lisbet Prinsloo, who has spent two years in Cape Town and whose knowledge of English surpasses that of her relatives. For that matter, one of her cousins, a hot-headed Anglophobe named Jan Bothma, also desires this comely *meisie*. The rivalries arising from this enmeshed situation comprise a sub-plot in Brett Young's epic novel.

Brett Young didactically describes the Great Trek in Book Three, "Exodus", by focussing on the participation of the Prinsloos, their two English employees, and, briefly, Reverend Blair. Driving a train of wagons heavily laden with goods from Welgelegen, they trek initially in a generally northerly direction through Somerset (subsequently Somerset East) and Graaff-Reinet, and across the Orange River to Winburg, where they encamp with thousands of other Voortrekkers at the expansive camp of the so-called "United Laagers". In fact, these migrants do not co-operate harmoniously in their endeavour, which is racked by internal dissension. In any case, the greater part of the Prinsloo party casts in its lot with Piet Retief's trek bound for Natal. More than 1 000 wagons under his leadership cross the Drakensberg and descend into that fertile region. They initially find it virtually uninhabited and question reports that the Zulus oppose European settlement. Nearly seventy men accompany Retief to the royal kraal of Dingaan, the Zulu monarch, to negotiate the purchase of land. Meanwhile, on the domestic front, Bothma's attraction to Lisbet has prompted him to leave Potgieter's party *en route* to Natal and return to the Prinsloos. He is tempted to shoot his rival Oakley, but a thunderstorm, which the headstrong young Boer regards as the voice of God, prevents him from carrying out that misdeed. Retief and sixty-five of his men are less fortunate; after signing a document ceding land to the Voortrekkers, Dingaan orders them killed. Another party of Zulu warriors attack the remnant of the wagon train, in which Bothma, several of the Prinsloos, the two erstwhile English convicts, and a handful of people have remained. Only Oakley and Lisbet escape by riding away while Bothma sacrifices himself in a diversionary tactic. After nearly dying of thirst, they are found by another small band of Voortrekkers who take them along to Natal. A larger armed party avenges Dingaan's massacre of Retief and his men at the Battle of Blood River in December 1838. Oakley and Lisbet wed and settle briefly in Natal but, owing to heightened tensions between the British and Boer settlers there, choose to leave. They take their few belongings to the Transvaal, where Lisbet's Anglophobic brother, Barend, rejects her because of her marriage to an Englishman. The young couple elects to develop a farm near the eastern end of the Witwatersrand and, following a widely practised Afrikaans custom, name their newborn son Adrian after his grandfather. Lisbet sees

their offspring as emblematic of the future of the country: "When he grows to be a man he will call himself a South African or an Afrikander. Some day, perhaps, that will be a name to be proud of" (p. 641).

A Generally Unflattering Picture of the English

Notwithstanding his personal ethnic identity, the picture which Brett Young paints of the English is a generally disparaging one. Many of his Anglophone characters have serious personality defects, represent economically and politically oppressive structures, and otherwise embody to varying degrees mankind's inhumanity to man. Others are merely unintelligent, officious, and unappealing, failing to evince any admirable traits. Unquestionably, Brett Young has deliberately sought to avoid a Manichaean presentation of Caucasian ethnic groups in which one is significantly morally superior to the other.

The first few scenes in Book One illustrate vividly the severe cleavages in fog-shrouded British society which pit the rural proletariat against the landed gentry. The latter, fearful of the revolutionary spirit of the times, strive through Parliamentary and other measures to preserve this system and indeed to enhance their own wealth and control of the economy through further enclosures. In these aspirations they apparently have the support of the religious establishment. The parson who is a guest at Abberley's mansion where a crucial discussion of social distinctions takes place agrees that squatters' rights should be restricted and the land they occupy clearly designated for use by the economically privileged. "In looking after a brood of goslings, a few rotten sheep, a skeleton of a cow or a mangy horse, these fellows with rights of commonage lose more than they might have gained by an honest day's work and, what is far worse, acquire the habit of independence and idleness", he judges. This Anglican divine adds, "God did not create the earth, sir, to lie waste for feeding geese, but to be cultivated by man in the sweat of his brow" (p. 16). The lawyer, Vizard, who has lobbied for an enclosure bill on behalf of Abberley, similarly lends his support in their conversation. "The Reform agitation and the last Revolution in France have gone to their heads. To-day everyone talks of 'rights' and nobody of 'duties.' More than one Enclosure Bill has lately been wrecked by misguided sentimentality. The whole country is suffering from an epidemic of morbid sensibility", he laments. Vizard then relates this supposedly sentimental mood by criticising the general abolition of slavery not only in the United Kingdom but also in British domains overseas: "We are a Christian nation, sir, and should be above reproach.

But to lug in the Cape of Good Hope and the West Indian possessions, where heathens are in the majority, is not only unnecessary but foolish" (pp. 16-17).

The Disparate Afrikaans Cast

Brett Young creates a diverse and in some instances quite colourful cast of Afrikaners for his broad historical pageant. Not all of his Afrikaans-speaking characters are equally well drawn; several make brief, perfunctory appearances on the stage of history, while others remain long enough under Brett Young's pen to allow him either to bring out the contours of their complex personalities or to underscore their simplicity. To be sure, some of these *personae* embody traits which had long been stereotypical in English fiction, but a few squarely contradict such conventions. Brett Young's general attitude towards the Afrikaners of the Great Trek era thus resists facile classification. The overall picture of the ethnic group which emerges from *They Seek a Country* is clearly sympathetic, but also in places it is intensely critical. Through his Anglophone characters Brett Young voices various generalisations which are not necessary to the narrative and serve no purpose other than to shape readers' opinions of the Voortrekkers. For example, once the Great Trek is underway, Dicketts remarks to Oakley that he has consumed a great deal of alcohol in his day but never anything "so almighty fierce to the guts as the brandy-wine or whatever it is that these here chaps swill like water" (p. 403). Clearly Brett Young's intention with this utterance is to highlight his perception of the propensity of Afrikaans men to drink alcoholic beverages immoderately. A perusal of a representative cross-section of these Afrikaners will illustrate how Brett Young seeks to create a realistically differentiated impression of the group, and a consideration of his interspersed authorial comments about their general characteristics will reveal how he believed they either conformed to or departed from widely held notions about Afrikaners. In a few instances, Brett Young goes a step further and seeks to present equally significant aspects of the Afrikaners' self-image.

The first Afrikaner whom Brett Young introduces, Jan Bothma, comes very close to embodying the prevailing stereotype. His overall dimensions and physiognomy underscore his adherence to this type. Bothma's body is described as resembling "some tall, rough-hewn monolith". In one of the first allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures which he employs to define the Afrikaners, the physician Brett Young generalises that "many men of his race were cast in that Anakim mould"[15] and suggests that an amalgam of hereditary and environmental factors

has produced the present generation of the species "as though unlimited freedom of air and space, together with the virgin strength of the African soil in which the old seed was sown, had endowed its cells with fabulous powers of growth". Bothma stands six feet four inches (*i.e.* 193 centimetres) tall and has "massive thighs" (p. 161). Brett Young goes into considerable detail in defining Bothma's physiognomy. Perhaps most revealingly, this young man's cranium is disproportionately small when compared with his body. Reinforcing this pivotal feature, his "rudimentary" face, of the kind "a child might have contrived out of clay", suggests that Bothma is "informed by habit and instinct rather than by thought, slow to mirth or anger, enduring, endlessly patient, and, above all, obstinate" (p. 162). In fact, he evinces a temperamental disposition virtually from the outset as he physically abuses his oxen with a *sjambok*, that familiar sign of Afrikaner violence, while thunderously calling them "devils" and "schelms" (*i.e.* rascals) (p. 162), and he travels in fear of the "black mischief" represented by "vagrant Hottentots and Bastards as liberated slaves" who roam the countryside (p. 163). All of this is established within the course of a few pages in the first chapter of Book Two. Subsequently, Bothma repeatedly evinces a visceral hatred of Englishmen and their language, enormous physical strength, and a singularity of purpose as he strives to obtain his goals, be they a sexual liaison with Lisbet Prinsloo or the destination which his component of the Great Trek hope to reach. Immediately before his violent demise in a battle with Zulus who attack the cluster of wagons which he accompanies to Natal, Bothma reveals a noteworthy degree of self-discipline and courage under fire.

Cut from a partially different bolt of ethnic cloth is Brett Young's second Afrikaans character, the patriarch of the Prinsloo family, Adrian, at whose farm his nephew Bothma arrives shortly before Oakley and Dicketts are brought there. The juxtaposition of these two Boers immediately gives Brett Young an opportunity to broaden his canvas. To be sure, they have physical similarities. The elderly Prinsloo, then sixty years old, once stood as tall as Bothma but now droops. His ageing face is unadulterated Afrikaans: "There were remnants of power and ruthlessness in the line of the rigid mouth, the high cheekbones, the noble forehead, the craggy orbits within which his deep-set eyes of steel-blue appeared shrews and fearless, yet oddly old" (p. 171). Early on, however, Brett Young establishes a critical distinction between the personalities of Bothma and Adrian Prinsloo. While the former is rigid, the latter is, at times, flexible and indeed criticises the rigidity of Afrikanerdom as its bane. "The trouble with our people has always been the same", he avers during a heated discussion of relations between Afrikaners and British colonists at the Cape of Good Hope. "We do not change much. I suppose we are a turbulent people by nature" (p. 181). Prinsloo's own ability to adapt, however reluctantly, to evolving

conditions, is seen in his belated decision to join the Great Trek, notwithstanding his emotional and practical attachment to Welgelegen, which he has developed over a lengthy period. Possibly owing to his relatively advanced age, Prinsloo is neither seditious nor otherwise politically orientated. He does not regard the Afrikaners as necessarily permanent inhabitants of Southern Africa and, concerning British rule there, advises his family, "obey them while you live under them" (p. 182).

Brett Young may have provided a key to understanding how he wished British readers to regard the senior Prinsloo by describing at length how Reverend Blair perceives him. This Scotsman, who knows the family well after many visits to Welgelegen, mentally formulates his admiration in glowing terms: "Old Adrian had struck him from the first as a man of exceptional character and intelligence" who possessed "a grave balance of mind, a judicial lack of prejudice and breadth of outlook, unusual in a man isolated from civilized converse". The parson believes that "if he had need of an unbiassed judgment backed by experience and tempered by sympathy on any human problem of African life, there was no man living from whom he would sooner seek it than Adrian Prinsloo" (p. 272).

Perhaps nothing stamps Adrian Prinsloo more distinctly as a quasi-stereotypical Afrikaner whose conventionality harmonises with well-established literary images of Afrikanerdom and its place in South African history than his religious leanings. These, too, Brett Young begins to define almost immediately. As Bothma approaches Welgelegen, he hears the old man leading evening prayers. The Scriptural text which Prinsloo reads aloud to his kin is, as usual in similar fictional situations, "a savage portion" of the Old Testament, namely the story of the bloody civil war against Benjamin and the slaughter of Gibeah in Judges 20. The large numbers of the slain in this ethnic conflict stimulate the patriarchal Afrikaans farmer, who rises "in a savage ecstasy" at what he regards as just vengeance (pp. 168-169). Furthermore, manifesting another characteristic frequently ascribed to Afrikaners in South African English fiction and nonfiction alike, Prinsloo is quick to appropriate biblical passages to suit current political expediency. In the previously mentioned discussion about relations between Boers and Britons at the Cape, he responds defiantly to Bothma's report that English missionaries claim that God does not countenance slavery. "Their God is not ours", Prinsloo replies sternly. He quotes Genesis 9:25, one of the *loci classici* employed by those who have justified the enslavement of Africans as the supposed descendants of Ham, "Cursed be Canaan: a slaves of slaves shall he be unto his brethren", in dubious support of his position and remarks that the Israelites held slaves (p. 177). This advocate of slavery never refers to the New Testament and, on his farm on the Eastern Cape frontier,

understandably seems ignorant of the Biblical arguments which, for example, William Wilberforce and the members of the Clapham Circle had adduced for more than a decade in their campaign for the abolition of involuntary servitude in the British Empire.

Brett Young portrays Prinsloo's wife, Jacoba, in more flattering terms. To be sure, in his initial presentation of her, Brett Young falls back on a stereotypical literary sign of Afrikaner womanhood in underscoring "the ungainly deposits of fat which made her figure, slumped on the rest-bench, shapeless" but immediately adds that her face has a "placid sweetness" and that her voice is as "soft and melodious as that of a young girl" (p. 171). On the eve of the family's departure from their beloved Welgelegen, she objects to a toast damning the English, pointing out that there were British guests present (p. 360). After her husband is killed in a Zulu raid on their wagons, this loyal but exhausted widow insists on remaining there to face certain death rather than attempt to ride away to safety (p. 560).

The younger generation of Prinsloos fares less well under Brett Young's pen. Two of them are positively portrayed, but two others emphatically less so. Particularly significant in this regard, considering Brett Young's ethnic identity and that of most readers in Britain, is that the most salient factor in this generation which separates the siblings from each other is their attitude towards the English in Southern Africa. Some of them detest anything that smacks of English culture, while the central character of Lisbet Prinsloo imitates it unabashedly, to the great consternation of her brother Barend.

Lisbet is one of the most sympathetically limned characters in *They Seek a Country*, not least when considered from a British viewpoint. Brett Young emphasises that she has spent two years in Cape Town, the administrative centre of the British colony where, in a passage which perhaps reveals his desire for greater ethnic harmony in the Union of South Africa, "the English and Dutch lived side by side in perfect friendliness". There Lisbet has imbibed prodigiously of English life. Indeed, she has developed a preference for Englishmen over Afrikaners: "Their touch was lighter, they knew how to laugh and to play; their outlook on life was less grim, and nearer her own, than that of her Dutch relations who were always brooking and looking for grievances". For that matter, the former were "more civilized", a thought which Lisbet knows would infuriate her relatives. This atypical Afrikaans young lady also prefers the English language to her own, avails herself of every opportunity to speak it, and sometimes thinks in it. She holds no brief for the hostility of many Afrikaners, including her sister Anna and Jan Bothma, to the British and dismisses their attitude as "illogical and childish and indefensible" (pp. 212-213). Her conduct towards the recovering Oakley is initially one of nurturing, although a romantic

interest soon begins to germinate. On the trek to Natal, Lisbet diplomatically maintains some distance between herself and him, not least because she does not wish to rile Bothma, whose unsolicited advances repel her. Lisbet is no angel, however, when commenting on other Afrikaners' romantic relations. She dismisses her brother Barend's girlfriend as a person whom one could readily identify as a Dopper because of her undistinguished looks and reasons, "I suppose that anyone quite so unattractive as that must be a good housewife and know the whole Bible by heart" (p. 462). Within a few weeks of marrying Oakley and settling with him in the burgeoning town of Pietermaritzburg, she falls pregnant. When tensions between Boers and Britons flare up there, the Oakleys find themselves ostracised, and the disillusioned Lisbet, who transcended such rivalries during her years in Cape Town, is caught between the two factions. She is consequently disillusioned and miserable, and she cannot be consoled. They therefore pack their belongings and trek to the Transvaal.

Brett Young gives the historic leaders of the Great Trek mixed reviews which would hardly enhance their lofty status in the pantheon of Afrikaner heroes. Hendrik Potgieter he calls an "ungainly, dour, taciturn man" who was "the strictest of Calvinists" and "a Dopper from the straggling dark hair beneath his green-lined straw hat to his sagging trousers". Nothing about this rugged military leader seems refined; Brett Young declares that "there was no elegance or lightness of touch about him" and that "he would have regarded either as out of place in a God-fearing man" (p. 445). His rival, Gert Maritz, is in some respects his opposite. This younger and emphatically atypical Afrikaner is blessed with "a handsome, sanguine face, a mouth ready for laughter and a liking for elegance that showed itself not only in his gay, sky-blue wagons but also in a certain dandiacal elaborateness of dress–in his well-cut coat with its swinging skirts, his long, townish trousers, and the buff beaver hat he wore tilted rakishly on his well-shorn head or swept off with a gallant gesture when he bowed to a lady–women, old and young, were attracted by him wherever he went" (p. 444). Beyond his physical appearance, Maritz boasts a "restless and eager mind, sharp in matters of business, self-willed, self-reliant, self-opinionated...". Unlike Potgieter, Maritz is "a humorous man" whose jokes can be ribald and impious and sometimes poke fun at the "exaggerated seriousness" of the Doppers (p. 445). He is also described as a man with "transparent goodness" which makes him, "in his simplicity, seem a great man" (p. 604). Maritz does not, however, suit Adrian Prinsloo. When Bothma asks his uncle whether Maritz is "solid enough", Prinsloo retorts, "You mean rich enough, nephew, and slim enough. I know that man too" (p. 183). Piet Retief, who with several dozen other Afrikaners would die at the hands of Dingaan's men in 1838, does not emerge as a particularly well defined character. The

first reference to this man, retrospectively revered in some quarters as a martyr to the cause of Afrikaner resettlement, occurs in the same conversation at Welgelegen when Adrian Prinsloo challenges Bothma's assertion that he is "a solid man". "Retief, solid?" counters the seasoned patriarch of the clan. You don't know what you're saying. I know the man well. A bankrupt. He cleared out of Grahamstown more than ten years ago and left debts" (p. 183). Retief's own assessment of his years in that frontier town is different and undoubtedly appealing to British readers. As he emphasises in a conversation with one of the Prinsloos in Natal, "I, for my part, have never known anything but kindness from the English settlers. I made many good friends among them in Grahamstown" (p. 483). In any case, at the heart of Brett Young's portrayal of him lies a sincere if too trustful man who disregards warnings by Maritz, the Anglican missionary Francis Owen, and others that Dingaan has no intention of ceding land to European settlers and in fact poses a lethal threat to them. "If we listened to every rumour of that kind", he declares, "life would not be worth living. I think I am not a bad judge of men, nephew. Dingaan's no fool. He knows we have the whip hand of him. His heart may be as black as his skin; but his intentions are good" (p. 528). The following day Retief and his men suffer violent deaths at the royal kraal. Andries Pretorius, who arrives in Natal to assume command of the Voortrekkers there after the death of Retief, initially seems more promising than the other leaders: "He was a new man, a strong man, the only man for that bankrupt hour", one who had become enmeshed in the endless disputes which had burdened the Great Trek and impeded its progress (p. 604). Yet Brett Young's praise of him is measured. He ascribes to Pretorius chief responsibility for heightening the rivalries between the British and the Boers in Pietermaritzburg; indeed, he is the "new prophet" of the "old doctrine of racial hatred" which compels John Oakley and his wife to pull up stakes and trek anew to the Transvaal (p. 622).

How different are Brett Young's Britons and Boers, in the final analysis? Undoubtedly, he finds certain general dissimilarities but underscores that their overall differences are arguably less than some historians and other observers might think. Some representatives of these two colonial ethnic groups live in harmony, especially if they have had noteworthy personal contact. Others get on tolerably well, but a few Afrikaners are so brimming with vitriolic prejudices that they cannot countenance the sight of Englishmen or the sound of their language. Most notably, Lisbet and Oakley thrive together, but this atypical young woman has had considerable exposure to English colonists in Cape Town, while he, as a fugitive from the British penal system who owes his life to the hospitality of a frontier farm family, has no reason to harbour anti-Boer prejudices. Their relationship flourishes, except when exposed to acrimonious tensions between

the British and the Boers in Pietermaritzburg. This general attitude of potentially harmonious relations may reflect Brett Young's desire a century later to see harmony in the Union of South Africa and his view of the causes of the prevailing tension. Indeed, it is summed up in an almost homiletical comment by Piet Retief when he discusses with Sarel Prinsloo his views of the English: "And after all, there cannot be so much difference between us. They say the English first went to England from Holland. We both come of the same stock, nephew, and I see no reason why we should not be one people, forgetting England and Holland, which are no more than names to us, and thinking only of Africa, which is our land. Still it's early days to be dreaming of that . . ." (p. 483).

Characterising the Great Trek

Turning from the key question of ethnic characterisation to that of historical significance, we can consider Brett Young's overall portrayal of the Great Trek. Generally speaking, he obviously does not present this event as the heroic epic which it had become under the pens of Afrikaners like Gustav Preller. Indeed, in places Brett Young insists that it was an enormously troubled migration of people who varied immensely in terms of intelligence, interpersonal relational skills, motives, attitudes towards their British colonial neighbours, leadership ability, group harmony, enthusiasm for the undertaking, and other respects.

Brett Young consciously seeks to navigate a *via media* in his historical interpretation of the ætiology of the Great Trek. To that end, he constructs a discussion in which the Prinsloos and Jan Bothma at Welgelegen broach real and imagined forms of colonial maladministration at the Cape. Bothma is particularly incensed at what he believes is the insincerity of the compensation which the British offer Boers for the loss of the slaves. He notes that the total amount of money designated for that purpose fell short by more than 50 per cent of what had initially been promised and that the drafts issued to such farmers could be cashed only in London (pp. 178-179). This grievance is real, but Bothma's claim that the government in Cape Town is prodding the Xhosa to raid the Boers' farms smacks of credulity. "Your ears are too big, Jan", counters Prinsloo. "They mop up alarms like a sponge. The frontier is quieter to-day than I've ever known it" (p. 184). Other Voortrekkers have heard a disquieting rumour that the British colonial authorities have concluded a pact with the pope to bring the Dutch Reformed churches under the aegis of the feared Vatican (pp. 400-401).

The elder Prinsloo incorporates the ambiguity of motivations. Immediately before his previously mentioned debate with Bothma over the uprightness of Retief and Maritz, he dismisses the nascent trek as an absurdity and professes that "a man who abandons land he has paid for and a house he has built is an improvident, hot-headed fool. No man of age and judgment would play such tricks with his property" (p. 182). Yet in the end Adrian Prinsloo himself treks.

If some of the reported grievances which prompted many Afrikaners to abandon their farms lacked realistic substance, Brett Young insists that the internal dissension amongst the Voortrekkers did not. Indeed, "from the moment when the first parties had crossed the Orange [River, thereby leaving the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope]", he relates, "the trekker community had shown a disposition to disintegrate" (p. 444). At the heart of their disputes lie personality clashes, such as that which pits the followers of Potgieter against those of Maritz, and, to some extent in tandem with these moments of strife, religious factors, such as differing spiritual currents within the flow of the Dutch Reformed tradition. Related to the second element of discord, the Voortrekkers are not of one mind in their willingness to accept Erasmus Smit, a Dutch immigrant who has never been formally ordained in the Dutch Reformed Church but who has served the avowedly anti-slavery London Missionary Society, as their migrating pastor appointed by his brother-in-law, Gert Maritz (pp. 447-453). Finally, the Boers' intense desire for autonomy makes some resistant to virtually any form of government, even when it comes from their own ranks. Piet Uys, for instance, resents the restrictions which Retief and his colleagues have imposed regarding hunting and turf management. "Who was Retief (above all, who was Maritz?) to set himself up as a tyrant over a free community[?]" wonders Uys. "What right had these fellows to forbid men as good as themselves to burn off their veld or shoot game which was the gift of God to all sons of Adam[?]" (pp. 456-457). The dissension also intrudes into the Prinsloo family; one son, Barend, and Adrian's nephew Bothma express hostility to the Voortrekker government and decide to follow Potgieter to the Transvaal, while the rest of Adrian's family, after he warns that "our house is divided, and only evil can come of it" (p. 460), opts for Natal. Brett Young's judgment of this general cleft in the ranks of the Voortrekkers is sweeping: "The Trek was the Great Trek no longer. It had been broken now once for all and could never be mended" (p. 489).

Concluding Observations

Even if De Kalb and Brett Young had not explicitly acknowledged their indebtedness to oral tradition amongst the descendants of the Voortrekkers and the research of Eric Anderson Walker, respectively, their novelistic reconstructions of the Great Trek clearly reveal that they were continuing through the medium of fiction two quite different streams of memory which embodied Afrikaans and English perspectives on the Voortrekkers and members of the other ethnic groups involved in this grand historical episode. Nowhere is this crucial distinction more evident than in the characterisation of the Voortrekkers and their attitudes towards the English and the causes of the Boer emigration. It is hardly surprising that De Kalb's unabashedly partisan *Far Enough* with its general vilification of the British colonial establishment was the only English novel about the Great Trek to be translated into Afrikaans. To a considerable degree, her portrait of the Van der Weg clan meshes well with the heroic image of the Voortrekkers which by the mid-1930s had become normative in Afrikaans circles. On the other hand, Brett Young's *They Seek A Country*, which in the opinion of the present critic stands artistically and historiographically head and shoulders above any of the other literary works analysed in this study, offers a largely sympathetic but nevertheless nuanced image of the Voortrekkers and one of the British which is reasonably balanced. To be sure, some of Brett Young's comments about prominent Voortrekker leaders challenged the hagiographic biographies which Preller and other like-minded Afrikaners had written about them. Had Afrikaners in the 1930s taken note of *They Seek A Country* in the 1930s, they may have taken umbrage at this aspect of his characterisation. But there is no evidence that more than a handful did so, and when they did, as we shall see later, they juxtaposed it with Cloete's resented *Turning Wheels*. In both De Kalb's and Brett Young's novels, of course, the characterisation of the Boers differed radically from the calumny which Lamont had heaped on them in *War, Wine and Women*. In Chapter X we shall consider how Cloete's imaginative reconstruction of the Great Trek departed from the traditions in which antecedent novelists operated and gave readers an impression of Voortrekkers that their descendants found easier to characterise and caricature during the ethnically tense 1930s than is defensible from a disinterested, scholarly perspective more than half a century later.

Notes

1. Jessica Brett Young, *Francis Brett Young: A Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1962), pp. 229-230.

2. Frederick Hale Private Archives, Eugénie de Kalb files, miscellaneous uncatalogued newspaper cuttings furnished by the Alumnae Association of Smith College.

3. Eugénie de Kalb, "The Death of Marlowe", *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 1,218 (21 May 1925), p. 351.

4. *Abstracts of Dissertations Approved for the Ph.D., M.Sc., and M.Litt. Degrees in the University of Cambridge for the Academical Year 1928-29* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 59-61.

5. Eugenie de Kalb, *Far Enough* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1935), v.

6. *Ibid.*, vi-vii.

7. P.W. Wilson, "South Africa, Where a New Nation Is in the Making", *The New York Times Book Review*, 26 June 1932, p. 3.

8. Eugénie de Kalb (New York City), letter to *The New York Times*, undated, in *The New York Times*, 7 August 1932, section V, p. 17.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. De Kalb, *Far Enough*, viii.

14. London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1934.

15. The Anakim were aboriginal giants who resided in southern Palestine but were annihilated by the entering Hebrews; see *inter alia* Numbers 13: 22, 33; Deuteronomy 2: 10, 21; Joshua 11:21, 15:14.

Chapter V

Rendezvous with Disaster?
The South Africa in Which Lamont Wrote *War, Wine and Women*

War, Wine and Women is *inter alia* a historical novel which reflects its author's experiences not only in the First World War but also in the Union of South Africa more than a decade later. To be sure, the explicit references to political, social, and religious conditions in contemporary South Africa and to the Voortrekkers of nearly a century earlier are few and brief, surprisingly so when one considers retrospectively the furore which they precipitated. Nevertheless, in those crucial elements of the text lie embedded bitterly anti-Afrikaner attitudes which testify to Lamont's perception of Afrikaners as he encountered them at the University of Pretoria and in South Africa generally. The Union was during the 1920s and early 1930s a cauldron of political and social foment in which forces of modernisation and urbanisation pitted race against race and ideology against ideology. The University of Pretoria and the important administrative city in which it had been founded as Transvaal University College, as we shall see shortly, were both Afrikaans-dominated and generally conservative centres of debate and other verbal strife. Owing in no small measure to the efforts of Gustav Preller, the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers was quite well developed by the late 1920s, and during that decade and the next the Afrikaner nationalism which stood in a symbiotic relationship to it was gaining powerful organisational structures, most notably the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* and its affiliated bodies, which facilitated the task of countering challenges to that myth.

Into this crucible strode the young lecturer from the United Kingdom where, as signs of rapidly changing times, the Labour Party, under the leadership of Ramsay MacDonald, had forged to the forefront of British politics and, as one key sign that a new era had dawned, granted diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union. Intellectually, Lamont's head was brimming with radical nineteenth-century French thoughts. Moreover, by his own testimony he cared not a whit for organised religion and had no allegiance to any church, a personal status which only increased the distance between him and his detractors. In retrospect, the clash between him and many of the people with whom he had to interact seems virtually inevitable, as does the fact that he regarded most Afrikaners with disdain as culturally provincial and politically reactionary. In the present chapter we shall examine Lamont's background and survey the South African milieu in which he taught and wrote, paying particular attention to Afrikaner nationalistic

forces which would prove incompatible with his beliefs and attitudes and which set the stage for the resentful and ultimately violent reactions to his affront to the Voortrekker myth which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

An Enlightened Young Intellectual and Author from the Shadows?

Relatively little is known about John Henry Parkyn Lamont; indeed, the facts that can be gleaned from such reference works as the *Dictionary of South African Biography*, to which the late Professor A.N. Pelzer of the University of Pretoria contributed an unreliable article about him, and contemporary newspaper accounts are few and not necessarily particularly enlightening for the purposes of literary history. The extent to which one can rely on the text of *War, Wine and Women*, which is clearly informed by its author's experiences, is debatable. What appears to have been the case, however, is that Lamont was born in England of partly Scottish descent in 1896. At age eighteen he joined the stampede of volunteers into the British army in 1914, and during the next four years this young soldier suffered the horrors of war as a soldier in France, where he was wounded. After the armistice he matriculated at the University of Wales in Cardiff in 1919 to study French. Three years later Lamont received a Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours in that subject.[1] After teaching briefly in Jamaica and Kent as well as taking a B. és L. in Besançon, he resumed his studies at the University of Wales and in 1926 received by examination and dissertation a Master of Arts. The subject of his research was the critical system of the versatile nineteenth-century French critic Hippolyte Taine.[2] Lamont's intellectual prowess seems beyond dispute, as we shall see shortly, if one gauges it by such evidence as the speed at which he wrote learned articles on short notice for the *Pretoria News* when engaged in public debates with less scholarly Pretorians over such matters as the moral defensibility of racial segregation. Lamont emigrated to the Union of South Africa in 1927 to accept a lecturership in French at the young University of Pretoria. During his spare time in that city, he completed the first of his two novels, *War, Wine and Women*, which appeared pseudonymously under the name "Wilfred Saint-Mandé" in London in 1931.

The Political, Social, and Economic Situation in the Union of South Africa

The Union of South Africa in which Lamont settled in 1927 had suffered numerous growing pains since its birth in 1910, and during the 1920s it was the scene of virtually continuous political, social, and economic turmoil. For our purposes it is not necessary to present a capsule survey of this strife in general, but a summary of some of the most consequential public developments can shed light on issues which contributed to ethnic tensions and indirectly nurtured the ongoing evolution of Afrikaner nationalism which ultimately wrecked his career at the University of Pretoria.

In brief, the South African Party of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts had ruled the Union from 1910 until 1924, when in the wake of labour unrest and its violent suppression that party had lost a significant degree of popular support and surrendered leadership to the more consistently Afrikaans National Party of General J.B.M. Hertzog in tandem with the Labour Party in the so-called "Pact" government which endured until 1933. The severely diminished Labourites then moved to the political periphery while the Nationalists and the South African Party formed a coalition which the following year led to a merger of these two factions as the United Party with Hertzog continuing as prime minister until 1939.

Economically, the 1920s were a turbulent decade for large numbers of white South Africans. The migration of Afrikaners from rural districts to mining and manufacturing regions accelerated as the South African economy expanded and modernised to include an increasingly weighty industrial sector. Many of these migrants lived in poverty, however, while Anglophone interests owned much of the private sector. Massive strikes, especially in 1922, led to clashes with the police and armed intervention, with the approval of Prime Minister Smuts, against the strikers. This unrest, it should be emphasised, occurred when memories of the Bolshevist Revolution of 1917 were still fresh in South Africa as in other parts of the world, and the fear of a similar communist overthrow of the state was a subjective reality. Within South Africa, the clearest manifestation of labourite radicalism was the formation in 1919 of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union under the leadership of Clements Kadalie. This diverse movement embraced members of various ideological persuasions but by the end of the 1920s, after the expulsion of communists from its ranks, had declined precipitously. It did not remain a noteworthy political factor during the following decade. In the meantime, the Hertzog administration had responded at least to the demands of white workers by implementing its so-called "civilised labour" policy. The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 denied most Blacks the right to engage in collective

bargaining. Such statutes as the Wage Act of 1925 and the Colour Bar Act of 1926 catered to the demands of both "poor whites" as well as semi-skilled white workers by excluding members of other races from certain categories of employment. The former law did this by specifying wages for various kinds of work without regard to race. The obvious implication of this was that white employers would generally prefer to hire whites if they could not legally employ blacks at a lower cost.

Urban segregation continued to unfold as fearful whites took measures to control the influx of black migrants to the cities. Such tactics actually can be traced back at least as far as the pass laws which restricted mine workers in Kimberley during the 1870s, but these provisions were strengthened in the 1920s. Municipalities were empowered but not uniformly required to remove black residents and relegate them to regulated townships. A categorical, nation-wide ban with few exceptions on urban integration would not come until after the accession of the National Party to power in 1948. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1930s South African cities were largely devoid of permanent black residents.

At the most primal level of interpersonal relations, the Hertzog government also sought to drive a wedge between blacks and whites. After the constituting of the Union of South Africa in 1910, each of its four provinces enacted legislation barring interracial sexual contact for residents of European extraction. Subsequently, the overarching Immorality Act forbade sexual relations between Europeans and "natives" anywhere in South Africa. This statute, initially enacted in 1927, made extramarital sexual relations between people of European descent and black Africans illegal. While the four provinces had previously passed similar laws, the Immorality Act thus unified the ban on a national basis.

The so-called "Black Peril" election of 1929 may well have contributed significantly to Lamont's perception of racial politics in his adopted land shortly after his arrival in Pretoria. During that campaign and subsequently, race relations were increasingly strained. White thugs attacked numerous black and coloured assemblies in various cities; in one incident which proved deadly, they destroyed the ICU Hall in Durban, thus dealing that almost moribund organisation another nearly lethal blow. The police in that city attacked with tear gas black dock labourers who were seeking to evade paying a poll tax. In the wake of these and other violent incidents, the government appointed a commission to investigate the conditions under which urbanised blacks were then living. Another result, however, was the amending in 1930 of the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1914 which severely limited the ability of non-whites to stage public protests against grievances they were suffering in the labour market and with regard to residential rights.

In the meantime, the Native Administration Act of 1927 had made it illegal to utter words with intent to promote feelings of hostility between whites and blacks in South Africa.

The Promotion of Afrikanerdom

The first few decades of the twentieth century were also a time of tumult in Afrikaans cultural circles when the *taal* became firmly and, in 1925, officially implanted, and Afrikanerdom in general gained considerable status and influence in various quarters. The general history of the birth and evolution of Afrikaans is too familiar to bear repetition here. By way of summary, having evolved from Dutch dialects beginning in the late seventeenth century with infusions of Khoi Khoi, Malay, German, French, English, Xhosa, and other loanwords, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries distinctly Afrikaans grammar and usage gradually replaced spoken Dutch in Southern Africa, although the place of that European tongue remained firm in the press, official government documents, and formal worship. The first newspaper in Afrikaans was *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, which was published for nearly three decades beginning in 1876 by the newly established *Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners*, which had taken upon itself the task of promoting the use of Afrikaans. Many other organisations would follow suit to serve that end as well as nurture Afrikanerdom in general. A second movement gained momentum early in the twentieth century, namely that to replace Dutch with Afrikaans as the normative and legally sanctioned language of Afrikaners.

Perhaps no person played a more important part in this than the Pretorian Gustav Preller, whose key rôle in shaping the popular image of the Voortrekkers we discussed in Chapter II. As a journalist, author, historian, and in other capacities, he was favourably placed to influence language policy amongst his ethnic fellows. Preller and like-minded Afrikaners founded in 1905 the *Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap* as a body to co-ordinate their efforts to gain legal status for and public acceptance of their spoken tongue. Four years later he helped to establish the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Akademie voor Taal, Letterkunde en Kunst*. The following year Preller helped to launch *Die Brandwag*, a periodical which served as an early vehicle for Afrikaans literary expression.

Afrikaans newspapers were either founded or evolved from Dutch ones early in the twentieth century; such periodicals as *Die Burger* of Cape Town, *Die Transvaler* of Johannesburg, and *Die Volkstem* of Pretoria provided Afrikaans-medium alternatives to the dominant English language newspapers in those cities by the 1920s. For decades the statistics of their circulation

remained unimpressive, but gradually they rose sufficiently to give these newspapers footholds in the world of South African journalism with their editors often acting as unabashed spokesmen for National Party interests.

One particularly noteworthy manifestation of the entrenching of Afrikaans on the cultural landscape of South Africa was the translation of the Bible into that language. The various Dutch Reformed denominations had long been the most inclusive Afrikaans social institutions. In some respects, to be sure, they had also been among the most conservative, but early in the twentieth century Dutch gave way to Afrikaans as the language of both the pulpit and the vernacular Scriptures. In 1929 the Gospels and Psalms were published in Afrikaans, while in a widely publicised milestone of regional ecclesiastical history the entire Bible was published in that language four years later.

Organisations dedicated to the promotion of the Afrikaans language and various other interests of Afrikaners proliferated after the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Boer War and would eventually provide much of the impetus for celebrating the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938. We shall touch on a representative sample to illustrate the breadth and thrust of this cultural movement. The previously mentioned *Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap* was founded in Pretoria in 1905 after Preller had contributed a series of articles in *De Volkstem* that year dealing with the promotion of Afrikanerdom. The new organisation had as its interlocking objectives 1) convincing Afrikaners that they should employ Afrikaans rather than Dutch both orally and in writing, 2) developing a pure form of Afrikaans, and 3) promoting Afrikaans patriotism. The attainment of these objectives was envisaged primarily through personal persuasion rather than the legislative process, which in any case was at that time highly unpredictable and would remain so until after the establishment of the Union of South Africa.

On the distaff side, organisations emerged early in the twentieth century to unite Afrikaans women, in some cases together with their Anglophone counterparts. The 1899-1902 war indirectly motivated these ventures. Dutch Reformed ministers' wives and other women organised efforts to alleviate the miserable conditions which prisoners of war were enduring on Green Point Common in Cape Town very shortly after the turn of the century. Furthermore, they formed wartime committees to execute relief work in parts of the interior of the Cape Colony. Perceiving a need for these endeavours to continue after the restoration of peace, some of the most active women met in Cape Town in September 1904 to form the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Christelijke Vrouwen Vereeniging*, whose constitution was adopted the following year. Four of the organisation's stated goals were to encourage welfare work, engage in educational activities, oppose the desecration

of the Sabbath, and promote the Afrikaans language. At virtually the same time, the first branch of another society, the *Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie*, came into being in Stellenbosch in 1904 on the initiative of Georgiana Solomon, the widow of statesman Saul Solomon, who enjoyed the co-operation of Annie Botha, the wife of the Boer military hero, General Louis Botha, who would soon become the first prime minister of the Union of South Africa. Seeking to avoid working at cross-purposes with the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Christelige Vrouwen Vereeniging*, this other body withdrew to the Transvaal, where it would continue to operate. Before the end of 1904 it had a branch in Pretoria. The two organisations began a long period of co-operation in such areas as education and homes for the aged and unwed mothers.

The Rise of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond*

Few organisations in South Africa have played a more important part in the promotion of Afrikanerdom and the nurturing of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers than the *Afrikaner-Broederbond*, which indirectly stood behind much of the immensely influential Great Trek centenary of 1938. It was launched at meetings in Johannesburg and Irene south of Pretoria in May 1918 as *Jong Suid-Afrika* by its first chairman, Henning Klopper, a religious young Afrikaner with little formal education who had gone to work for the railway at age fifteen but who would eventually be elected to the House of Assembly in 1943 and become its Speaker eighteen years later, and seventeen other Afrikaners. At that time the Union of South Africa was reeling under the devastating international influenza epidemic, and many of its citizens had fallen in the Great War, notwithstanding the opposition of many Afrikaners to the dispatching of thousands of their compatriots to fight in what seemed like a distant and winless European conflagration of little concern to their new nation-state at the southern tip of Africa. The neophyte society was renamed the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* two months later. During its infancy, this fraternity was by all accounts essentially cultural and not political. "It was nothing more than a semi-religious organisation", recalled one of its first members, L.L. du Plessis. Initially, there was little secretive about the *Broederbond*; in fact, its fellows were expected to wear membership buttons on their jackets. "We formed the Broederbond as a kind of counterpart to societies and clubs which, in those days, were exclusively English-speaking", recollected one of the founders, Lourens Erasmus Botha van Niekerk in 1964. "We decided the Broederbond would be for Afrikaners only - any Afrikaner - and that it would

be a sort of cultural society. We started raising funds to build up a library and we invited prominent Afrikaners to give lectures. There was nothing sinister about the Bond in those days".[3]

The *Broederbond* became a secret society in August 1921, when its rolls still encompassed only a few dozen members, reportedly because some members, chiefly teachers and other civil servants, claimed that their public affiliation had caused them to be persecuted.[4] Criteria for membership were tightened slightly to included *inter alia* Afrikaans ethnic identity and membership in one of the Dutch Reformed churches.

During the 1920s and 1930s the *Broederbond* remained a controversial (and, until 1935, little known) organisation which eventually sought to undermine the power of Prime Minister Barry Hertzog. This erstwhile Boer general who had been in office since the formation of the Pact government in 1924, Jan Smuts, and many other influential Afrikaans politicians who were less interested in preserving exclusivist Afrikaner nationalism than in maintaining a tenable political alliance with Anglophone compatriots opposed the *Broederbond* as a threat to the nation's tenuous political stability. For that matter, for several years civil servants were forbidden by law to join it. By November 1935, Hertzog's patience with this rapidly growing organisation had expired. His attitude towards the *Broederbond* is particularly relevant to this study, as it illuminates the ethnic tensions which underlay the hostility to *War, Wine and Women* and which cost Lamont his lectureship and health. Speaking at Smithfield in the Orange Free State that month, the Prime Minister denounced the *Broederbond* as a "secret political association . . . consisting only of Afrikaans-speaking members, the leading political spirits of whom are determined to rule South Africa over the heads of the English-speaking among us; and who are striving to raise Dutch-speaking Afrikanerdom to domination in South Africa, with the neglect of the rights and claims of the English-speaking portion of our population". Moreover, Hertzog declared that whatever the *Broederbond* had initially been, it had become a political force, "nothing less than the Purified National Party working secretly underground", and identified D.F. Malan as one of the fraternity's members. Malan's cohort in the *Broederbond* also drew the Prime Minister's fire: "Like Dr. Malan, they are secretly work not to entertain any co-operation aiming at national unity with the English-speaking section, and thereby they stand in direct racial conflict with our English fellow-Afrikaners, and are striving by means of domination on the part of the Afrikaans-speaking section to set their foot upon the neck of English-speaking South Africans". To substantiate this allegation, Hertzog read from a confidential circular letter issued by *Broederbond* chairman Professor J.C. van Rooy and secretary general Iwan Lombard the previous year: "Brothers, our solution for South Africa's ailments

is not that one party or another shall obtain the whip hand, but that the Afrikaner-Broederbond shall govern South Africa".[5]

Hertzog's adversaries reacted strongly to his exposé. While such English-language dailies as *The Star* and *The Rand Daily Mail* of Johannesburg quoted his remarks approvingly *in extenso*, the headline in *Die Burger*, of which Malan had been the founding editor, screamed, "Nog 'n Tirade deur die Eerste Minister", and his successor defended the *Broederbond* in an editorial titled "Rassehaat!"[6]

By then, however, many members of the *Broederbond* may not have been particularly concerned about opposition from the United Party. The schism in the National Party in 1933 and 1934 had effectively cemented the *Broederbond*'s place in the remnant of that organisation, the so-called "Purified Nationalists", and it would remain firmly entrenched in its upper echelons for the next half-century, *i.e.* long after the reunion of these two factions. At the time of Lamont's five-year stay in Pretoria, the *Broederbond* was numerically in the ascendency. Official statistics of its anonymous membership illustrate its growth. In 1925 there were still a mere 162 on its rolls. By 1930, however, this had soared to 512, an increase of more than 216 per cent. The figure continued to rise steadily. In 1932, Lamont's last year in the Union of South Africa, the *Broederbond* encompassed 826 members, an increase of over 60 per cent in two years, despite the resignation of its controversial chairman, L.J. du Plessis.[7] Looking ahead, we can note that during the years leading up to the observance of the Great Trek centenary in 1838, and possibly owing to the massive publicity which that anticipated event and its celebration received, the *Broederbond* continued to grow rapidly throughout the 1930s. By 1940, it could look back at a decennial increase of nearly 300 per cent in its ranks.[8]

Subsequently Founded Afrikaans Cultural Organisations

While membership rolls of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* remained confidential, it created in 1929 the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* as a public front. This co-ordinating agency, which aided affiliated local organisations throughout the Union of South Africa, will be discussed below.

The *Afrikaanse Studentebond*, which would play a prominent part in Lamont's case in 1932, traced its origins to developments at Victoria College (subsequently the University of Stellenbosch) shortly after the Union of South Africa was constituted. Two local students' societies there arranged a national conference at which several champions of Afrikanerdom addressed delegates from

throughout much of the country. A central target of this incipient movement was the near-monopoly which the English language then had on tertiary education in South Africa. Though delayed by the outbreak of the First World War, the *Afrikaanse Studentebond* was constituted in 1917. Like many other Afrikaans organisations of that period, it rested on an explicitly Calvinist foundation. Its leaders concentrated most of their efforts on gaining recognition of Afrikaans as both a medium of instruction and an examination subject at South African universities and teachers' training colleges. These goals were largely attained by the end of the 1920s. In the meantime, the National Union of South African Students had been organised in 1924 and sought to encompass all university students. This met with resistance in Afrikaans quarters, where NUSAS was often perceived as too internationally orientated and politically liberal. Many young Afrikaners thus withdrew their membership in NUSAS and declared their allegiance to the ASB, which remained a potent force at the universities in Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Bloemfontein, and Potchefstroom.

The youth association known as the *Voortrekkers* received its initial inspiration in part from analogous organisations overseas. More than anyone else, Dr C.F. Visser deserves credit for prompting the emulation of them in South Africa. He became acquainted with some of the nascent youth movements similar to the Boy Scouts during his years of study in Germany and other European countries. Returning to the Orange Free State, shortly after the conclusion of the First World War he organised for Afrikaans boys and girls the association which came to be known as the First Voortrekker Movement. In this wake of this development, a similar body was formed at Graaff-Reinet in 1923. A quantum leap forward occurred in 1931 when *Die Voortrekkers* was organised on a nation-wide basis with the public blessing of Prime Minister Hertzog. When negotiations with the international Boy Scout movement failed to lead to affiliation, the *Voortrekkers* remained a growing and intensely ethnic organisation within the Union of South Africa. Employing certain military models and flying the historic flag of the short-lived Republic of Natalia, it recruited both male and female members as young as six years of age; their eldest comrades were in their early twenties. Like many other Afrikaans bodies, the *Voortrekkers* would participate actively in the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938.

One of the most influential of the organisations, especially in cultivating the public image of the Voortrekkers, was the *Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorweë en Hawens)*. Initiated by railway workers who formed the first local branch in Cape Town in August 1930, it soon spread to Johannesburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London, Windhoek, and Kimberley. At a congress held in Johannesburg in February 1931, the national body was officially constituted. Henning Klopper of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* played an instrumental

part in its origins.[9] The membership rolls of the ATKV, as it was and still is generally known, grew rapidly during the mid-1930s as the centenary of the Great Trek approached and Afrikaner nationalism waxed accordingly. In April 1935, for instance, there were 8 239 members, but just twelve months later this figure had climbed nearly 40 per cent to 11 328, and before the end of 1937 more than 20 000 Afrikaners belonged to the ATKV.[10] It will be recalled from Chapter II that its leaders were among the prime movers of the Great Trek centenary, especially the ox wagon trek from Cape Town along "die Pad van Suid-Afrika" to Pretoria.

These and various other organisations that sought to promote Afrikaans cultural interests during the first third of the twentieth century did not exist in isolation, but enjoyed some measure of co-operation under the umbrella of the previously mentioned *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings*. Led by a central council called the *Afrikaanse Nasionale Kultuurraad*, the FAK derived its ideological stance from Christian nationalism and emphasised not merely secular cultural aims but also Christian spirituality in a Dutch Reformed mould. From the outset, the FAK has pursued its goals through various publishing programmes, frequent assemblies, and other means. It played an instrumental rôle in the planning of the Voortrekker centenary of 1938, including raising funds for the Voortrekker Monument. Through the FAK, the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* thus exercised enormous influence on the public nurturing of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers.[11]

Much of this assertion of Afrikaans identity at various levels and in many sectors of society both stimulated and benefitted from the "two-stream" cultural policy which the National Party had advocated since its inception in 1914. This approach to dealing with the exigencies of multiculturalism was inherently reductionist and racist, in that it subordinated indigenous African and other traditions to the simultaneous maintenance of the English and Afrikaans languages and cultures generally. From the viewpoint of many Afrikaners in the wake of the devastating outcome of the Second Anglo-Boer War, a realistic goal was maintaining and gaining for their emerging language official status alongside English; the replacement of English with Afrikaans as the sole medium of white communication was obviously unattainable. As we shall see shortly, at the University of Pretoria this goal helped to determine official language policy, which for more than two decades remained one of parity for the two languages.

Efforts in many quarters to promote the use of Afrikaans and gain its official recognition eventually proved quite successful. This was arguably almost inevitable, considering that the majority of South Africans of European descent spoke it as their first language. On the literary level, however, English remained the dominant language. When the Dutch-born linguist Adriaan J. Barnouw of Columbia University in New York visited South Africa in 1932 to study at first-hand

the evolving place of Afrikaans, he found that "English books are popular among Afrikaners, in spite of all Nationalist slogans and anti-British prejudices". Professor Barnouw quoted statistics from lending libraries in the late 1920s which H.S.M. van Wickevoort Crommelin had initially published in the Dutch review *De Gids* in 1930.[12] At the State Library in Afrikaans-dominated Pretoria, for instance, only about 3 per cent of the books borrowed in 1928 were in Afrikaans. That year patrons borrowed 77 107 English books in Pretoria as opposed to only 275 in Afrikaans and 217 in Dutch. In 1927, 90 per cent of the books circulated from the public library were in English and 10 percent in either Dutch or Afrikaans. Writing in 1934, however, Barnouw could temper his gloomy portrait of the limited rôle of Afrikaans as a literary language by emphasising that during the past few years there had been "an awakening of popular interest in Afrikaans literature" and pointing to *inter alia* the popularity of the relatively new weekly journal *Die Huisgenoot*, whose circulation had already reached some 40 000, as evidence that linguistically and culturally the 1930s were a decade of significant change.[13]

The University of Pretoria and Afrikaner Nationalism

In retrospect, the presence of an ox wagon, that revered emblem of the Great Trek, in the coat of arms of the University of Pretoria silently presaged the violent controversy in which Lamont would become embroiled by deprecating the Voortrekkers in *War, Wine and Women*. Officially established in 1910 (two years after the actual commencement of instruction) as Transvaal University College, the name it bore until it became autonomous as the University of Pretoria in 1930, the institution at which Lamont lectured in French was by the late 1920s showing signs of becoming a fairly well-rounded if still small seat of tertiary learning.[14] During the first half of 1931, which was Lamont's last full year in Pretoria, the full-time enrolment was only 502 students, although the lecturing staff then numbered no fewer than 132, yielding an enviable ratio of approximately four to one.[15] Owing to the proximity of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and the fact that well over one-half of the students were Afrikaners, it could hardly be an exclusively English-medium college. A policy of ostensibly equal bilingualism was therefore adopted. Though born of necessity, this approach fitted the ideals of many South Africans who believed that the world of higher education could serve the interests of reconciliation between the nation's two principal European ethnic groups in the wake of the embittering Second Anglo-Boer War. Accordingly, Afrikaans lecturers were to co-operate with Anglophone colleagues

bilingually, a task which proved considerably easier for the former, as many of the English-speaking personnel declined to learn enough Afrikaans or Dutch to lecture in either of those languages.

Bilingualism always had its detractors at the University of Pretoria, but at least as late as October 1931 the rector, Professor A.E. du Toit, defended the policy vigorously at the annual dinner of the Buxton Hostel. He affirmed his vision of the University becoming both thoroughly Afrikaans and thoroughly English. "The day when either of the two sections of the population did no longer make use of the University, this ideal would have failed", du Toit declared. "It was the duty of the one section to learn the language of the other, and not only to be able to read and write, but also to think in that language".[16] His remarks, of course, can be read as pertaining primarily to Anglophone members of the lecturing staff, who were often perceived as dragging their feet in their acquisition of Afrikaans.

Far from being isolated at a provincial outpost oblivious to intellectual currents emanating from older institutions overseas, the university's lecturing staff, particularly in the Faculty of Arts, was quite cosmopolitan and encompassed men of several nationalities who had earned doctorates or other post-graduate degrees at various European and North American universities. A few examples will illustrate the diverse qualifications of these learned gentlemen, some of whom would play prominent parts in the Lamont controversy.

An Englishman, Professor J.P.R. Wallis, who had taken as his highest degree an M.A. at the University of Liverpool, served as the dean of the Faculty of Arts during Lamont's years in Pretoria. Wallis further headed the Department of English, which by 1928 also had two senior lecturers and one lecturer. Professor T.H. le Roux, a South African who had received a doctorate in Leiden, led the five-person staff of the Department of Dutch and Afrikaans. The other language departments played at best second fiddle. Two Afrikaners who had earned doctorates at the Universities of Ghent and Vienna, respectively, taught German, while the diminutive Semitic Languages and French departments were one-man shows. The Department of Philosophy, with two professors and two lecturers who held various degrees from the Universities of Groningen, Bonn, Oxford, and South Africa, was among the largest in the Faculty of Arts. Students could also study various African languages, Bantu Ethnology, Economics, Education, Music, and Social Anthropology, Greek, and Latin in that faculty during the late 1920s.

No member of the staff during the 1920s and early 1930s would gain greater renown in South Africa or overseas than Edgar H. Brookes, and the story of none sheds more light on the situation in which Lamont would find himself. Born in Staffordshire less than three months after Lamont had entered the world, he emigrated to Pietermaritzburg in 1901. This gifted youth

matriculated only ten years later and began to prepare for university examinations chiefly through private study. In 1919 and 1920 Brookes received his B.A. and M.A., respectively, from the University of South Africa. He was thereupon appointed lecturer in Political Science at Transvaal University College. After Brookes earned his D.Litt. at his *alma mater*, he was promoted to professor of Public Administration and Political Science at the same institution. In his dissertation, "The History of Native Policy in South Africa from 1830 to the Present Day", and, more so, in a study published in 1927 under the title *The Political Future of South Africa*, Brookes called for greater non-white participation in the governance of the country, a moderately liberal position within the spectrum of white South African political thought of that time. Study visits to Europe and the United States of America in the late 1920s solidified his commitment to reform. Brookes helped to found the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1929 and served as its president for three non-consecutive terms beginning in 1931.[17] This English Natalian admitted in his auto-biography that by accepting a university post in Pretoria he had "entered a new world" but insisted that he had soon developed an appreciation of many aspects of Afrikaans culture. His political liberalism and renunciation of segregation, however, eventually alienated him from many of his colleagues. "I was keeping strange company and writing curious books", Brookes explained. "The years 1931-3 were a time of considerable strain for me at the University of Pretoria". Especially vexing was Rector du Toit's refusal to grant him academic freedom to express his political views in speeches and newspaper articles. Rather than subjecting himself to being upbraided repeatedly by Du Toit, Brookes chose to resign in 1933.[18] His relationship with the senior administrator of the university presaged Lamont's treatment at the hands of the same man. Brookes's ultimately disharmonious relationship with the administration of the University of Pretoria also resembled closely that of Professor Leo Fouché, whose case we considered in Chapter II.

When one places the history of the University of Pretoria into the context of that of Afrikaner nationalism and the rise of Afrikaans cultural organisations, it becomes obvious that Lamont began his South African academic career at a highly inauspicious time for one whose liberal intellectual mind and cosmopolitan demeanour conflicted so dramatically with central pillars of this ascending ethnic movement. It is probably true, as Professor Albert Grundlingh has argued, that the University of Stellenbosch became in the 1920s and 1930s the academic focal point of Afrikaner nationalism.[19] But in terms of nascent ethnic fervour, its younger rival in the Transvaal does not appear to have lagged far behind. Indeed, its lecturing staff included a subsequently prominent theoretician of academic nationalism who became an inevitable and

implacable opponent of his junior British colleague Lamont. Professor Thomas Johannes Hugo (1886-1963), a native of Tulbagh, pursued his undergraduate studies in South Africa before sailing to The Netherlands and earning a doctorate in psychology at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Returning to his homeland, he taught briefly at the University of Cape Town before moving to Transvaal University College, where in 1925 he was appointed professor of philosophy, a post he would occupy until his retirement more than a quarter-century later. The internationally educated yet ethnocentric Hugo rode the wave of Afrikaner nationalism beginning during his first few years in Pretoria. He was a founding member of the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings*, the public front of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond*, in 1929, and two years later he began a lengthy affiliation with the *Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Taal, Lettere en Kuns*.[20]

In a brief but pithy and aptly titled book published in 1941, *Die Afrikaanse Universiteit en Sy Taak in die Volkslewe*, Hugo bluntly spelt out his views of the linkage between Afrikaner nationalism as a conservative cultural movement and the *volksuniversiteit* as an instrument for the promotion and maintenance thereof. This seasoned professor was deeply concerned that in a rapidly transforming society Afrikaners were becoming alienated from themselves, notwithstanding - indeed in no small measure because of - their participation in the industrialisation of the Union of South Africa. "'n Volk se geluk en selfverwesenliking bestaan nie in stoflike welvaart nie, maar in die nastrewing van sy roeping en uiteindelike bestemming", he asserted. Central to this ethnic group self-realisation was the promotion of its unique culture. Hugo went so far as to insist that that of the Afrikaners was not merely unique, but without a real rival in the country: "Om mekaar nie mis te verstaan nie, is dit nodig dat ons goed sal besef dat daar maar een nasionale kultuur in Suid-Afrika is, en tereg word dié genoem Afrikaanse kultuur". As the "fakkeldraer" of enlightenment throughout the land, "die Afrikaanse Universiteit" was obliged to play a leading rôle in this campaign. Indeed, "die Afrikaanse Universiteit het op die manier 'n eie taak en roeping wat deur geen ander liggaam vervul kan word nie". If it remained neutral in the cultural struggle gripping the Union of South Africa or sought to serve the interests of various ethnic groups simultaneously, it would be little more than "'n soort van kosmopolitiese saamraapsel van groepe sonder 'n vaderland, sonder idealisme en sonder 'n nasionale doelstelling". Lacking that kind of ethno-cultural spine in its policies, it would be a virtually impotent but nevertheless costly purveyor of knowledge: "So 'n universiteit kan dan nog 'n kwantum parate kennis in die vorm van veelwetery aan 'n groep enkelinge meedeel, maar hy sal geen vormende invloed op die volkslewe hê nie. Hierdie soort universiteit is dan nie baie meer as 'n parasiet, wat teer op die volkskas, terwyl dit nie in staat is om waaragtige nasiediens te lewer nie". Hugo called for drastic

action to transform the academic *status quo* in the direction of ethnic mobilisation: "Die Afrikaanse Universiteit kan nie, en durf nie volstaan met 'n bietjie hervorming hier en 'n bietjie lap en timmer daar nie--die moet totaal omgevorm word. Ook hier geen ewolusie van die oneigene nie, maar wel rewolusie en nuwe vorming van die eigene".[21] It is impossible to discern how representative Hugo's thinking on the purpose of Afrikaans tertiary education was of opinion on the staff of the University of Pretoria. As we shall see in Chapter VII, however, it is striking how neatly it meshes with the sentiments expressed by critics of Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* and the reasons which people at the university and in the Afrikaans public put forth for demanding his dismissal.

Lamont Participates in a Debate over Segregation

Lamont gained some measure of local notoriety in Pretoria and revealed his willingness to trade rhetorical blows publicly a few months before *War, Wine and Women* was published. The young lecturer entered the fray when his senior colleague Edgar H. Brookes squared off against Hugh R. Abercrombie in a public debate over the moral defensibility of the segregationist policies of the Hertzog administration. A native of Wales and a prominent Methodist layman, Abercrombie had arrived in Southern Africa in 1887 when he was twenty-five years old. Eventually he engaged in a variety of journalistic, commercial, and agricultural pursuits while establishing himself as a prominent businessman in Pretoria. Abercrombie, whose wife was Afrikaans, was committed to Anglo-Afrikaner *rapprochement* after the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Boer War and to the maintenance of European civilisation in Africa. He wrote fairly widely on these subjects, and late in life he edited a monthly periodical titled *White Africa*.

In the debate which the provincial League of Nations Union arranged at the Pretoria Town Hall on the evening of Thursday, 25 June 1931, and which P. Grobler, Minister for Lands, moderated, Abercrombie spoke first and defended recent policy trends which severely restricted the permanent settlement of blacks in South African urban areas. As paraphrased in the *Pretoria News*, he conceded that "the life of the natives in the towns was not to be envied" and predicted that "they would ultimately take the place of many Europeans", although how he envisaged this occurring was not reported. Abercrombie underscored the high rates of crime, infant mortality, and children born out of wedlock among urban blacks and averred, "Already natives were forcing the whites into the gutter". His two-fold solution to this state of affairs involved both burying the indigenes, *i.e.* by having them work exclusively underground in the mines while white workers

would occupy positions above ground, and denying the former permanent settlement rights in the cities. Abercrombie also advocated increasing the white population of urban South Africa but apparently did not state whether he believed this should be accomplished by encouraging European immigration or through other means.[22]

Professor Brookes responded by acknowledging that he did not disagree entirely with his opponent and assuring his audience that if white and black interests were incompatible as a European he would surely side with those of his own ethnic group. He denied, however, that such was the case. Revealing the limits of his evolving liberalism at that time, Brookes contended that Abercrombie's proposal to allow only black women to reside in the cities while restricting black men to locations elsewhere would merely nurture immorality. Furthermore, he noted, "There would be no native families from which we could draw our labour, but only a floating native population of unmarried males and females". In his second statement, Abercrombie asserted that there was sufficient rural land to accommodate the black population of South Africa and that "natives were well treated and lived in quiet harmony" near mines where they were employed. Brookes thought the latter assertion ludicrous and asked about the existence of faction fights, a question which Abercrombie refused to take seriously, dismissing such armed confrontations as mere "entertainment" which challenged the monopoly the Irish had on such amusements. At the end of the debate, those present approved by a margin of eighty-three to fifty-nine a resolution advocating complete urban segregation and the gradual removal of blacks from the towns, apart from those who were accommodated in compounds or required for service by the European population.[23]

Lamont did not let Abercrombie's arguments stand unchallenged. The young lecturer promptly drafted a lengthy reply which occupied three columns of the *Pretoria News* the following week. Lamont's detailed comments not only shed light on his critical views of South African racial policies but also illuminate his penchant for strident and in places caustic rhetoric. Setting the tone of his essay, he remarked that the Abercrombie-Brookes debate had "produced the usual crop of flapdoodle" and declared that the only remarkable aspect of the evening was the fact that fifty-nine people present "were able to differentiate between logic and bunkum". Lamont accused South Africans generally of often being "actuated by fear and hate in our dealings with the natives". Few were the men like Brookes, he concluded, who struggled to secure "some measure of justice for the Bantu peoples of this country".[24]

Lamont held no brief for Abercrombie's assertion that the indigenes had no legitimate grievances but were only stimulated to protest when Europeans told them that they were being

unfairly treated. After more than three years in the Union of South Africa, Lamont could readily catalogue numerous injustices in the area of race relations. Among them, he cited the "starvation wages" which many blacks received, severe fines for petty infractions of laws, the pass system which "manufactures criminals", the Riotous Assemblies Act which prevented most public protests against grievances, the colour bar in the labour market, the lack of citizenship for blacks, woefully inadequate funding for black education in general, no recent appropriations for educating black medical personnel, and the exploitation of "semi-slave labour" in the agricultural sector. Lamont urged white South Africans to wake up and take stock of the realities of the racial situation in their country, even if only in their own self-interest during economically depressed times. "Sooner or later South Africa must realise that a country cannot prosper when three-quarters of the population are slaves in all but name", he reasoned. "It is only by making the natives producers and consumers that industry will prosper. Any other policy is short-sighted and doomed to failure". Lamont concluded that not merely economic uplifting but a comprehensive overhaul of South African social policies with regard to black urbanisation was imperative and would bear fruit: "At present our native policy is chaotic, absurd and indefensible. Most of the evils attendant on black occupation of towns are due to the rotten conditions under which the natives live".[25]

Lamont's hard-hitting indictments elicited an equally prompt and severe response. Mr J. von Moltke of Pretoria apparently thought them rash, half-baked, and made without the adduction of evidence, and he sought to counter them by posing a lengthy series of questions, challenging Lamont to have the courage to answer them. Von Moltke wondered, for example, "When and where are natives paid starvation wages?" Shifting gears in his rhetorical transmission, von Moltke asked whether not only blacks but also whites had been subjected to excessive fines, whether Lamont had ever seen substandard accommodation for whites that was not suitable for pigs, and whether white men with families to support were compelled to pay considerably higher taxes than unmarried blacks. Comparisons with African-American conditions also seemed to provide an arsenal of weapons which von Moltke could shoot at Lamont. Responding to the accusation that the South African government had appropriated very little money for black schools, von Moltke asked, "Is our system of education in the towns of the slightest use to the native, and is it not directly opposite to the lines advocated by Booker Washington?" Similarly, he wondered whether citizenship rights had actually been beneficial to African-Americans, obviously implying that they had not. Finally, von Moltke asked cryptically why "segregation, gradually applied in the towns, [may] not be practical when several towns in the United States of America are entirely white to-day?"[26]

In his conclusion, von Moltke argued that it was arrogant for Lamont and others with similar opinions on matters of racial policy to assume that blacks should unquestionably develop along the lines of white civilization, a point which Lamont had never specifically made. Rather than forcing people of different races to live together, this German-South African believed, governments should encourage ethnic groups to develop along distinct lines. What may have motivated von Moltke to take these positions, however, was ethnocentric self-interest. He challenged Lamont and other reformers to recognise that "unless we gradually segregate the natives from the towns, we have no hope of maintaining our white civilisation".[27]

Lamont's rejoinder appeared in the *Pretoria News* only two days later. He did not take von Moltke's bait by responding to his individual queries in general, choosing instead to dismiss most of them as "futile in the extreme" and coming from a "distinguished negrophobe". Most of them, Lamont declared, proved nothing save their author's "arrant bias or ignorance of history, economics and political vision" stemming from an assumption that two wrongs make a right. He adhered to his initial contention that "the native does not get a square deal", a position which he regarded as "self-evident". Turning to von Moltke's assertion that many South Africans favoured segregation as potentially beneficial to the natural development of the indigenous population, Lamont answered that advocates of separate development tended to fall into two categories, namely missionaries who blamed contact with lower class Europeans for corrupting their black flocks, and "those Europeans who, afraid of the native, wish to get rid of him and, under the guise of natural development, keep him ignorant, servile, debased". Lamont also addressed squarely the charge that tertiary academic education was irrelevant to black Africans. He noted that this could also apply to white people and that educational authorities were not of one mind on the issue of what forms of training might be most beneficial for the indigenous population. Lamont also attacked directly the racist rhetoric of which he had heard too much in South Africa. "The fear complex is cleverly exploited by unscrupulous politicians, who make it one of the main planks in their platform", he lamented, perhaps recalling the "Black Peril" election two years previously. Yet the reasons for its continuation were evident: "The struggling farmer and white artisan may be confidently expected to continue voting solidly for repression almost indefinitely". Lamont placed his hope partly in appeals to "the opinion of the civilised world". With no slight optimism, he vowed that "the days are passing when a power can exploit subject races with impunity".[28]

Clearly, Lamont was by mid-1931 disillusioned with much of what he had seen of South African racial policies during the Hertzog administration. Much can be learnt from examining closely his arguments whose main points we have summarised above. What they conspicuously

fail to elucidate, however, is his attitude towards Afrikaners past and present or how he perceived the Great Trek. His brief diatribes against the Voortrekkers and their descendants in *War, Wine and Women* may have struck his friends and acquaintances in Pretoria as unexpected bolts out of the blue, although of course it is entirely possible that given the increasing tensions between the Afrikaners and the Anglophone members of the lecturing staff at the University of Pretoria during the formative years of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* and its FAK he expressed disparaging sentiments about the former. That must apparently remain a mystery. In any case, Lamont's attitude towards racial segregation (which, it must be emphasised, enjoyed widespread support in both Afrikaans and English-speaking circles) indicated that he stood far from the ideal of ethnic preservation and quasi-isolation which for many decades would remain a pillar of Afrikaner nationalism.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to the historical context of the other principal work discussed in this study, Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels*, it might be noted that Cloete was residing in the Transvaal during the years of Lamont's lectureship in Pretoria, and much of what we have discussed in terms of the South African cultural and political milieu of the late 1920s and early 1930s still held true when Cloete belatedly launched his career as a novelist by writing *Turning Wheels* after returning to England a few years later. There were, to be sure, certain significant differences by then, such as the distancing of D.F. Malan's "Purified Nationalists" from their erstwhile National Party comrades who, under Barry Hertzog's leadership, had joined hands with Jan Smuts's South African Party in the "Fusion" coalition which led South Africa for much of the remainder of the decade, ongoing Afrikaner urbanisation and the consequent growth of the "poor white" segment of the population which would eventually help to propel the reunited National Party into power, the emergence of bitter hostility to Jewish immigration, the rise of proto-fascist "shirt" movements in the Union, and the crescendo of enthusiastic Afrikaner nationalism leading up to the massive observance of Great Trek centenary in 1938. Some of these developments, such as anti-Semitism in the Purified Nationalist ranks, we shall discuss in our consideration of *Turning Wheels*. But to a great degree the perceptions these two neophyte authors had of South African politics overlapped and were formed at largely the same time.

Notes

1. Frederick Hale Private Archives, Lamont file, certificate by A.D. Hall, Academic Secretary, University of Wales, 14 February 1997, pertaining to receipt of Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours by John Henry Parkyn Lamont on 20 July 1922.

2. Frederick Hale Private Archives, Lamont file, certificate by A.D. Hall, Academic Secretary, University of Wales, 14 February 1997, pertaining to receipt of Master of Arts by John Henry Parkyn Lamont on 20 July 1926.

3. Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978), pp. 44-46.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

5. "Premier Denounces Underground Racialism", *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg), 8 November 1935, pp. 11, 15.

6. "Nog 'n Tirade deur die Eerste Minister" and "Rassehaat!", *Die Burger* (Cape Town), 8 November 1935, pp. 1-2, 4.

7. A.N. Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond: Eerste 50 Jaar* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979), p. 32; Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners*, (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1978), p. 47.

8. Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond: Eerste 50 Jaar*, p. 32.

9. W.H. Immelman, ""Die Afrikaanse Taal-en Kultuurvereniging (Spoorweë en Hawens) Ontstaan en Groei", *Die Taalgenoot*, VII, no. 2 (December 1931), pp. 10-11.

10. P. van Heerden, "Die A.T.K.V. se Ontstaan en Groei", *Die Taalgenoot*, VII, no. 2 (January 1938), pp. 121-123.

11. M.J. Swart and O. Geyser, *Vyftig jaar Volksdiens. Die geskiedenis van die Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings 1929 tot 1979* (Johannesburg: Federasie van Afrikaanse Kutuurvereniginge, 1979), is a defensive description of use only for obtaining certain basic facts about the FAK.

12. H.S.M. van Wickevoort Crommelin, "Zuid-Afrika bezint zich", *De Gids*, XCIV (September 1930), p. 417.

13. Adriaan J. Barnouw, *Language and Race Problems in South Africa* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934), pp. 38-39.

14. For the general history of the University of Pretoria, see *Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers Beperk, 1960).

15. "Professor and Student", *Pretoria News*, 31 July 1931, p. 6.

16. "Ideal of Our University", *Pretoria News*, 5 October 1931, p. 6.

17. M. Boucher, "Brookes, Edgar Harry", *Dictionary of South African Biography*, V (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1987), p. 92.

18. Edgar H. Brookes, *A South African Pilgrimage* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977), p. 47.

19. Albert Grundlingh, "Pollitics, Principles and Problems of a Profession: Afrikaner Historians and their [*sic*] Discipline", *Perspectives in Education*, XII, no. 12 (Summer 1990/91), pp. 1-19.

20. M. Hugo, "Hugo, Thomas Johannes", *Dictionary of South African Biography*, III (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1977), pp. 422-423.

21. T.J. Hugo, *Die Afrikaanse Universiteit en Sy Taak in die Volkslewe* (Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1941), pp. 7, 113-121.

22. "Natives in Urban Areas", *Pretoria News*, 26 June 1931, p. 7.

23. *Ibid.*

24. H.P. Lamont, "A Deluge of Balderdash", *Pretoria News*, 1 July 1931, p. 2.

25. *Ibid.*

26. J. von Moltke (Pretoria) to *Pretoria News*, undated, in *Pretoria News*, 4 July 1931, p. 4.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 6.

28. H.P. Lamont, "Segregation Debate", *Pretoria News*, 6 July 1931, p. 3.

Chapter VI

War, Wine and Women: Its Generic Context and Commentary on South Africa

As indicated in the introductory chapter of the present study, Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* was grossly misunderstood in South Africa. The verbal attacks of various Afrikaners on this novel and the physical assault on its author sprang from a fundamental misreading of the text. Many of these South Africans perceived Lamont's book as essentially a calumnious misrepresentation of themselves and their forebears and found his accusations that the Voortrekkers engaged in miscegenation and were unsanitary particularly offensive to their ethnic dignity. They reacted by blowing out of proportion his acidic remarks about the Voortrekkers and their descendants as well as the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church while almost totally ignoring themes which are developed at much greater length and integrated relatively well into the structure of the narrative and plot. These include *inter alia* Lamont's denunciation of British propagandistic rhetoric during the Great War, his criticism of British military strategy, his sometimes deprecating descriptions of His Majesty's soldiers as unhygienic and sexually immoral (and concomitant humanising of the Germans, who in the main had been daemonised in wartime and post-war British writing), and his indictment of the chauvinism and hypocrisy of the Anglican clergy during the war. These matters are crucial to an understanding of *War, Wine and Women* and will accordingly be treated here in some detail, as they underscore how utterly misdirected the rhetorically abusive and ultimately physically violent treatment of Lamont by outraged Afrikaners was and that his subsequent dismissal from his lectureship at the University of Pretoria sprang from a fundamental misreading of his novel which snowballed into a hateful movement among people who, for the most part, may not have read the book at all.

Another dimension of the irony in South Africans' reactions to *War, Wine and Women* lies in the general silence of Anglophone readers about most of the matters cited above as pivotal themes. Many English-speaking residents of the Union of South Africa nurtured close cultural ties to the United Kingdom during the 1920s and 1930s, not least as tensions between this segment of the population and Afrikaners remained strong. To mention but a few areas in which Anglophiles stressed their British connections, the Church of the Province of South Africa stood squarely in the Anglican tradition of ecclesiastical loyalty to the Archbishop of Canterbury while some of the other denominations in the Union relied heavily on tertiary educational institutions in England for the training of their clergy; insistence on the continued flying of the Union Jack remained a bone of contention; and rival segments of the population debated whether "God

Save the King" or "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" should be the national anthem. The Union of South Africa was a member of the Commonwealth of Nations since the inception of that body in the early 1930s (notwithstanding a sharp division of opinion on this matter in the ranks of Afrikanerdom) and sent teams to the quadrennial British Empire Games beginning with the first such competitions in Canada in 1930. Ships of the Union Castle Line sailed regularly between British and South African ports carrying tourists in both directions and a considerable number of His Majesty's subjects as immigrants to South Africa. Memories of South African assistance to the United Kingdom in the First World War remained strong during the 1920s. One focal point of this in the collective memory of Anglophone South Africans and, for that matter, many Afrikaners, was the massive loss of life at the Battle of Delville Wood in July 1916. The South African memorial there was dedicated in 1926; Prime Minister Barry Hertzog delivered an oration at its unveiling. All told, more than 12 000 South Africans lost their lives in the European conflagration. Furthermore, South Africans of British descent had their own ethnic organisation, the Sons of England Patriotic and Benevolent Society, the first lodge of which was founded at Uitenhage in 1881 as an offshoot of an analogous body in Canada. Initially comprising chiefly immigrants, in the twentieth century its membership gradually became largely African-born. The Sons of England sought to maintain various British traditions and the English language in the Union of South Africa at a time when Afrikaners were campaigning to gain legal recognition for their own *taal*. Beyond their cultural interests, members of the Sons of England used their organisation as a public platform for broadcasting their views and supported benevolent causes. There were never more than a few thousand Sons (and a smaller number of Daughters in women's branches) in the national organisation. All of this emphasises that ethnic fervour was by no means an exclusively Afrikaans domain. Furthermore, as an English-language book of particular interest to readers with a sense of loyalty to the United Kingdom, it is thus all the more surprising that *War, Wine and Women* did not draw fire from the Anglophone sector of the population. After all, Lamont's debut novel is a veritable literary abattoir in which he butchers British holy cows right and left.

In the present analysis of *War, Wine and Women* we shall pay special attention to the passages which Afrikaans critics of the book found contemptible and consequently lambasted. At the same time, however, we shall pay greater attention to other aspects of the text for two principal reasons. First, literary historians, including specialists in the fiction of the First World War, have almost entirely overlooked Lamont's contribution to it, so we shall take steps towards filling that *lacuna* in the pertinent scholarly literature by analysing central themes in *War, Wine and Women* (some

of which, it should be emphasised, relate directly or indirectly to the controversy in South Africa over its distribution and its author's appropriateness for his lectureship at the University of Pretoria) and considering them in the context of conceptual generalisations which particularly John Onions has made about the body of post-World War One literature to which it belongs. Secondly, both the primary documentation pertaining to the controversy over *War, Wine and Women* and the very little that has subsequently been published about this novel and its young author's fate in South Africa are highly misleading; one could in fact gain the impression from these sources that Lamont's book was primarily an attack on certain aspects of Afrikanerdom. A corrective focusing to a considerable degree on his treatment of the First World War is thus sorely needed. To be sure, these two reasons are intertwined. Some of the aspects of cultural criticism whose sting was particularly painful to Afrikaners can be readily applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Lamont's construction of many Britons during the war years. This broader consideration of *War, Wine and Women* illustrates vividly how members of one ethnic group which exists in a state of tension with another can react strongly to what they regard as affronts to its dignity made by a member of the rival group, even when the work in question is even more critical of that second party.

The Evolution of "War Books"

The guns of August that shot Britain into the First World War also triggered a new explosion of literary creativity. That becoming embroiled into a major European war for the first time in nearly a century soon became a traumatic experience for the British public hardly requires amplification here. Historians, literary scholars, and others have commented frequently and in detail on the impact which the outbreak of hostilities and protracted course of the brutal war made on the home front. Both well-established and, much more commonly, neophyte *littérateurs* began to respond during the first year of the war (initially with no small amount of gusto and patriotic fervour) by writing a large amount of poetry, fiction, and literature in other genres about the impact it was making both in the trenches of northern France and on the British people at home.

To be sure, literature about war was hardly novel in British cultural history, but the protracted butchery which erupted in 1914 posed a decidedly new challenge to the generation then living. During the Victorian and Edwardian eras, most of the military conflicts involving their national armed forces were essentially colonial wars far removed from both the grime of

London and the idyll of English country life. The press had brought the most extensively publicised of these, the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, into sitting rooms throughout the British Isles, but it was fought on the Imperial side by a relatively small, professional army and had little direct bearing on the life of John Bull. Furthermore, despite attacks on imperialism from the Labour Party, the economist John Hobson, and other quarters, national confidence continued to run strong and, at least in the Empire seemed to remain firmly intact, bolstered by the cheerleading of men like Rudyard Kipling, the martial music of Edward Elgar, and any cursory glance at a world map, which confirmed the article of faith that the sun never set on the British global hegemony. Nationalism, often played in a chauvinistic key, remained a dominant public tune. For the most part, prior to 1914 literary writing about war was done by men who had never performed armed service and who perceived military intervention overseas as beneficial to the grand design of propagating British and Christian civilisation. The actions of military men, within this framework, were heroic insofar as they served the perceived national interest. Exercising their free will as individuals, they acted bravely, often risking life and limb, on behalf of the society which they represented and sought to defend. Particularly in Victorian popular literature, the military hero was a recurrent theme. As one historian of British fiction and drama has pointed out, however, there was also an anti-war strain in nineteenth-century literature which mounted a minor challenge to the national pantheon of heroes. Byron, for example, criticised the Duke of Wellington, whom Alfred Lord Tennyson and others would subsequently laud, as a cutthroat. That Romantic poet was not alone, and the critical attitude he represented towards militarism endured: "The tradition was still in effect in August 1914, but it had been obscured by the success of popularist military literature".[1]

The existence of various British attitudes towards militarism did not by any means change overnight when the Great War broke out. From the outset, it should be emphasised, the goals of British writers of the Great War were varied. Many sought to serve the national military cause by creating propaganda that underscored German atrocities on the one hand and British heroism on the other. More ingenuous authors early in the war could write in an enthusiastic, patriot mode perhaps nowhere more succinctly captured than in Rupert Brooke's well-known poem, "The Soldier", written shortly before he succumbed to septicema *en route* to the Gallipoli campaign and was buried in an olive grove on the island of Skyros: "If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign field that is forever England". Ian Hay's novel, *The First Hundred Thousand*, published in 1915, served as a model for several other fictional works which applauded the Tommy effort in almost adulatory terms, although even this book contains a

moderate amount of graphic descriptions of martial horror. Literature written in this nationalistic vein was but one of several factors which kept much of the British public quasi-isolated from the horrors of the war their soldiers were experiencing across the English Channel. "The home front's understanding of the war was filtered through literary and pictorial images which varied in origin from official propaganda to individual enthusiasm", summarises John Onions. "These images came mainly from poems, novels, articles, cartoons, postcards, films and posters, which on the whole depicted warfare sentimentally and emphasised the social nature of heroism", *i.e.* selfless and even chivalric action on behalf of British society.[2]

Well before the end of the war, however, critical voices had come to the fore, a development which the seeming futility of the effort, coupled with the mounting numbers of casualties, made virtually inevitable. Two of the best-known wartime poets, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, heralded this partial change of attitude with their biting attacks on conventional notions of social heroism. If they changed some British minds, they obviously failed to alter the course of history. Furthermore, on the whole public opinion in the United Kingdom remained squarely behind the war effort until the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918. Propaganda, perhaps, proved more influential than the works of dissident poets.

After the conclusion of the Great War, retrospective accounts of it, both fictional and nonfictional, temporarily flourished on the British book market. As Steven Kirk Trout has argued, subsequent historiography of the hostilities strongly reflected the influence of the fiction by employing many of the metaphors and archetypes which novelists had embedded in their reconstructions of it.[3] By the early 1920s, however, public interest in the war had declined, although some enthusiastic novels, such as *If Winter Comes* by A.S.M. Hutchinson, published in 1921, and Ernest Raymond's *Tell England*, which appeared the following year, promptly gained popularity. By the mid-1920s, in Onions's analysis, literary artists had in increasing numbers begun to limn a more problematic portrait of the 1914-1918 episode in the nation's history. "Whatever the war achieved historically, and novels were naturally reticent about that, it was variously shown to be fraudulent, wicked, or at least disturbing in ways that civilians had not appreciated. The social hero, the hero who upheld a just cause, was being painted out of the war's picture before 1928".[4] This sceptical trend reached its apogee around the end of the decade, when many of what were by then loosely termed "war books", a loosely defined genre which often amalgamated fiction, autobiography, and history, contained enough graphic realism to elicit accusations of gratuitous goriness from their detractors. Not only indigenous British works, but also the English translation of Erich Maria Remarque's incredibly popular *All Quiet on the Western Front* (*Im Westen*

nichts Neues), published almost immediately after that work had appeared in Germany in 1929, contributed to the shaping of an increasingly widely accepted perception of modern European warfare as a bestial affair in which soldiers are not heroes but essentially victims. There was no consensus about the representativeness or accuracy of these "war books", which infuriated many patriotic souls, some of them veterans of the war, but also in many cases drew the praise of critics for their literary merit and graphic renditions of the undeniable butchery that had taken place a decade or more earlier. A prominent arena for the public debate which ensued was *The Times* of London, which in April 1930 carried a large number of letters from angry readers who averred that the works in question were decadent, unpatriotic, mercenary, and failed to represent the war fairly. Both defenders and detractors of the literature in question pointed out that not all of it was pacifistic or critical of the national war effort. This face-off was not an isolated phenomenon in the capital. Other British newspapers and magazines also served as fora for the debate.

As calculated by Onions, this dispute coincided with the zenith of publishers' interest in the war. In 1927 eight war novels appeared in Britain, chiefly in England. The following year the number rose to ten, and in 1929 it soared to twenty-five. The high-water mark was reached in 1930, when no fewer than 36 different new novels about the First World War rolled from British presses. This amazing output nearly saturated the market. A year later, the tally dropped back to ten, one of which, of course, was Lamont's *War, Wine and Women*, which he had begun to write a few years earlier when interest was cresting.[5]

British Critical Surveys of "War Books"

Critical evaluations of the "war books" as a genre began to emerge in the early 1930s and continued to appear from time to time for approximately half a century. In contrast to contemporary reviews of individual books, much of the early commentary on the genre as a whole was decidedly negative. Among the first of these general commentaries was a short book written in 1930 by Douglas Jerrold (1893-1964), a culturally conservative Tory historian and publisher who had written in a nationalistic vein about the history of part of the Royal Navy during the Great War. In his *The Lie about the War. A Note on Some Contemporary War Books* he cast a broad international net and considered collectively Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quite on the Western Front*, Robert Graves's *Good-bye to All That*, Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu*, and eleven other fictional works. The accolades which they had received, Jerrold

countered, were not fully deserved. The principal weakness of these books, he declared, was that they failed to deal with "the actualities of war". At the same time, he conceded that "there is no such thing as 'the truth about war'", but argued that this was partly because human conduct in times of peace and war was largely identical apart from the fact that during the latter considerable numbers of men were engaged "in a very dangerous trade". Hence, it was fundamentally misleading to focus almost exclusively on brutal and other violent aspects of wartime conduct. Jerrold was particularly incensed at the pacifistic nature of much of the literature in question. The horrific themes which had become a *Leitmotiv* made little effect, he contended. "If I believed for a moment that these books, by painting a true picture of the *general significance* of the last war, were likely to help to assure a just and continuing peace, I should regard it as a piece of professional impertinence to criticise any lack of perspective, any inaccuracies, or any lack of historical sense", Jerrold declared.[6]

Cyril Falls showed no more mercy in his *War Books. A Critical Guide* which appeared later that year. Ascribing the flurry of volumes which had appeared in 1929 and 1930 to an unartistic aping of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, he accused their authors of writing essentially propaganda rather than creative literature. More specifically, they had sought "to prove that the Great War was engineered by knaves or fools on both sides, that the men who died in it were driven like beasts to the slaughter, and died like beasts, without their deaths helping any case or doing any good". Falls resented the one-sided characterisations of British Army personnel in many of the English books, particularly the tendency of the authors in question to dwell on their alleged cowardice, drunkenness, and moral turpitude with regard to sexual conduct. He further accused these *littérateurs* of exaggerating the violence of the war by focusing almost exclusively on it in telescoped narratives in which one battle followed hard on the heels of another with virtually no respite. "Hundreds of games of football were played every day on the Western Front", he recalled, "by infantry as well as other arms, but how often does one hear of a game in a 'War book'?" The genre also rubbed Falls's nationalistic fur the wrong way. Noting that this dimension of his criticism would "appeal only to those who still believe in the virtues of British patriotism, honour and devotion to an ideal", he thought that "the constant belittlement of motives, of intelligence, and of zeal is nauseous".[7]

"War books" of at least the quasi-fictional sort, in contrast to the poetry of men like Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, largely faded from critical view relatively early in the 1930s as British critics were occupied with other concerns and the pivotal issue of pacifism made considerable headway in its own right in the United Kingdom. Not until 1965 did Professor Bernard Bergonzi

of the University of Warwick issue the first major retrospective study, *Heroes' Twilight: a Study of the Literature of the Great War*. In stark contrast to the earlier surveys by Jerrold and Falls, this was a dispassionate treatment written by a non-participant in the First World War. Borrowing terminology from post-Barthian Christian theology, Bergonzi acknowledged the breadth of attitudes towards heroism in the works under consideration and concluded that "the dominant movement in the literature of the Great War was . . . from a myth-dominated to a demythologized world". He dismissed Jerrold's attack on the genre as the simplistic and utterly tendentious reaction of "a right-wing journalist of romantic inclinations" whose defensiveness had caused him to overlook the complexities of the phenomenon and who was no less prejudiced than the authors whom he had raked over the coals. Bergonzi also rejected Jerrold's supposedly elitist notion of the general invalidity of perceptions of the grandeur of the campaign from the lower ranks, *i.e.* that "considered from the standpoint of the individual private or junior officer, the war must inevitably seem a meaningless muddle; only when regarded from the exalted position of the corps, or even army, commander, could the movements make any sense at all". With the benefit of hindsight this literary historian could dismiss as absurd Jerrold's belief of 1930 that the war had been praiseworthy because it had favourably altered the cause of history by replacing German militarism with parliamentary democracy. Bergonzi agreed with Jerrold only with regard to a very few points. He concurred, for instance, that "it is a limitation of the war novels he is discussing that they could only present the responses of a single, usually isolated consciousness, and made no attempt at a Tolstoyan largeness".[8]

In a study published thirteen years later, the eminent Scottish literary scholar Professor Andrew Rutherford squarely addressed the pivotal question of wartime heroism in English literature, focusing on phenomena as diverse as Lawrence of Arabia and, in one lengthy chapter, "The Common Man as Hero: Literature of the Western Front". He explained that at that time heroism was widely regarded as "obsolete as an ideal, and that the literature of heroism belongs to the childhood of the individual or of the race". Rutherford called for a more sympathetic and less categorical frame of mind, however, in assessing the complexities of heroism in English literature. Many of the authors in question, he declared, had dealt quite consciously with "the complicated, contradictory nature of adult experience" and eschewed "ethical and psychological simplicities" but had nevertheless chosen "to treat heroic themes and reinvestigate heroic values". Among them he numbered many of the authors of "war books". In the main they had not, Rutherford insisted, thereby glorified violence but acknowledged a "fundamental dualism" in which they had recognised "on the one hand the horror, waste and futility, the essential evil

of war" while on the other professed their "admiration for the courage and greatness of spirit men showed in confronting it".[9] Critical opinion had thus progressed light years beyond the facile categories which the initial commentators like Douglas Jerrold had set up.

In his specifically focused study of the genre, Onions finds some measure of artistic value in a few of these books but less than contemporary observers expected to develop during the 1920s. He passes the following judgement: "The harvest of war books . . . proved to be a large one of generally poor quality. Its weaknesses as realistic literature, which is what most of it aimed to be, are obvious enough: sensationalism, formlessness, poor characterisation and bad writing".[10] To some extent, as we shall see in the present chapter, *War, Wine and Women* is guilty on at least three of these four general counts. Lamont dwells endlessly on redundant descriptions of both British and German soldiers dying violent deaths in and near the trenches and of his own deeds in slaying dozens of the enemy. The novel runs on and on with relatively little sense of development, apart from generally increasing disillusionment with war in general, the officer corps, and other targets of Lamont's wrath. One gains the impression that a seasoned novelist could have made every point in half as long a book. A few of the characters in *War, Wine and Women* emerge as credible figures with complex personalities, but many of the others are little more than cardboard types whose chief task is to voice statements Lamont is trying to emphasise. In terms of the quality of the writing, however, in many places this neophyte author is surprisingly sophisticated. His intelligence and erudition shine through the pages of *War, Wine and Women*. At times, though, the young lecturer's knowledge of French philosophy and literature as well as related topics serves him poorly, especially when he places implausibly sophisticated thoughts into the mouth of his teenaged narrator. A large number of untranslated foreign words, phrases, and sentences also unnecessarily burden the text.

Lamont's Stated Rationale for Writing *War, Wine and Women*

Precisely why Lamont wrote *War, Wine and Women* and thereby contributed yet another volume to a field which had become very crowded by the early 1930s might be ultimately impossible to ascertain. As will be seen in the following two chapters, he was not entirely ingenuous with regard to his authorship and appears to have been quite willing at times to sacrifice honesty on the altars of defensiveness and self-promotion. In any case, apparently at the behest of the

editor of the *Pretoria News* during the controversy about the book, Lamont contributed to that newspaper an article in which he declared his motivation for writing his first novel.

According to this retrospective testimony, while a teenager in the trenches Lamont had kept a diary of his experiences there with the intention of using it as the basis of a book. This handwritten text, however, had been lost when he was gassed and taken unconscious to hospital. "The loss of my notes put my idea of ever writing a war book completely out of my mind", he stated. Furthermore, for several years following the conclusion of hostilities Lamont was too preoccupied with his education to look back at his four years in France and Belgium. Only after many other veterans of the war had published their recollections had he decided to take up the pen and do likewise in response to what he regarded as the fundamental inadequacy of their works. "Quite fortuitously I reviewed certain war books for various journals, and gradually came to the conclusion, as a result of letters from readers, that the vast majority of civilians were surprisingly ignorant about the true facts of war", Lamont recalled without indicating which volumes he had evaluated or in which periodicals his reviews had appeared, information which might have lent some credibility to his assertions. Exactly what he thought unsatisfactory about the genre he did not reveal in this article. On the one hand, Lamont implied that previous writers had painted too chauvinistic a picture of the British involvement in the war. "It was assumed, in certain quarters, that the war was a holy crusade, a most ennobling business, from which men returned purified, immaculate heroes who had made the world safe for civilisation", he argued without citing a single title in which this attitude had prevailed. "Having read a few war books, I felt that none had given the war as I knew it". On the other hand, Lamont virtually contradicted himself two paragraphs later by declaring that "writers of war books have been accused of tarnishing the memory of the glorious dead of the sake of filthy lucre". He acknowledged that much of his portrayal of the war lay on the gory side of the ledger and left little room for veneration of the fallen, and he professed with characteristic self-confident hyperbole that "the circulation of my book would have been ten times greater had I agreed to leave out many things that offend susceptible people". Lamont had thought it his moral duty to record his emphatically unchauvinistic recollections of the war, which he thought had been an historic tragedy, especially for his generation on both sides of the battlefield, and to challenge prevailing British assumptions concerning the righteousness of the victors and the dastardliness of the vanquished. "It is my firm conviction that the youth of Europe were hoodwinked; completely bamboozled", he reasoned. Moreover, the disaffected Lamont warned presciently that the terms of peace had set the stage for a subsequent war: "Future historians will show that justice was not wholly on one side; all the nations were

guilty. And no peace is possible until that iniquitous Treaty of Versailles–drawn up on the assumption that the Central Powers were wholly guilty while the Allies were wholly innocent–is drastically revised". In the same article, he asserted that "everything in the book actually happened, but not necessarily to me, although my autobiography is to be found therein, mingled with those of others". Lamont also stated that he had received "scores" of letters from erstwhile servicemen who had praised his realism and that he valued their corroborative testimonies more highly than "the vapid mouthings of senile critics, who damn any attempt to describe realistically what the 1914 generation went through".[11]

Plot Summary

Because *War, Wine and Women* faded into oblivion not long after the controversy it engendered in South Africa, we shall present a brief summary of its plot as a necessary backdrop against which to discuss certain pivotal themes in the work, especially the decline of British war-time innocence, which were overlooked when the book became the subject of heated controversy in South Africa a year after its publication, Telling his tale through a first-person narrator named Wilfred Saint-Mandé, Lamont slogs through the horror and misery of the Great War in a linear narrative which spans no fewer than 556 pages divided into twenty-seven chapters. Internal evidence suggests that the narrator speaks several years after the conclusion of hostilities, although not necessarily much later than the early 1920s. *War, Wine and Women* is definitely not the account of an elderly man, but rather that of a young one not unlike Lamont himself.

The first two chapters, however, are of a much different character. The narrator justifies his curious name while shedding light on his complex personality, his ambivalent attitudes towards participation in the bloody conflagration in France and Belgium, and his dual Anglo-French ethnicity by relating how one of his paternal ancestors fled the French Revolution. That aristocratic forebear, Henri Saint-Mandé, belonged to the lesser nobility and had distinguished himself in battle against an Austrian force before losing his right arm to a severe wound which required amputation. The brief military career of this Saint-Mandé, and particularly its termination, would resonate in that of his narrating descendant. Arrested by the *canaille* during Danton's Reign of Terror in 1793, Henri Saint-Mandé was sentenced to death but with the aid of an intrepid fiancée escaped from gaol and was furtively transported to the Atlantic Coast. He settled in England in 1793 but lost his vision in a bungled suicide attempt after learning that his betrothed had been

executed on the guillotine. Eventually he became a successful wine merchant in London and died in 1840 after engaging in philanthropic pursuits. Lamont uses twenty-one pages to establish this historical connection to his young, early twentieth-century narrator.

The remainder of *War, Wine and Women* spans the period from mid-1914 until November 1918. At the beginning of Chapter Three, Wilfred Saint-Mandé, who informs us narratorially that he was born on 5 November 1896 (p. 73), relates that he left school in June 1914 nearly five months before his eighteenth birthday and spent the next few weeks visiting his maternal grandmother and an aunt in Dundee. He also states that his mother was a native of Perth and was in Scotland as diplomatic tensions mounted in Europe and the outbreak of war was announced. Postponing his plans to begin undergraduate studies at Oxford, the linguistically talented youth, who speaks French fluently owing to a spell as a scholar in France and can also read German without difficulty, returned instead to his parental home in London and joined the enthusiastic rush to enlist in the army by hurrying posthaste to a recruiting office in a "sordid district" which was filled with equally fervent young compatriots whose coarse language and rough working-class attire were conspicuous to this would-be soldier. This mingling of social strata foreshadows a persistent theme in the plot. Saint-Mandé's parents are shocked at his action, and his father offers to use his influence to release Wilfred from his commitment. The son insists on fulfilling his obligation, however, and begins military training with large numbers of chiefly ill-educated, crude Englishmen with whom he initially has little in common save their mutual desire to protect Britain from the perceived German threat and join their comrades at the front.

The initial stage of Saint-Mandé's military life entails various tribulations. Perhaps for the first time in his eighteen years, he has to eat ill-tasting food and is subjected to a flurry of encounters with extensive immorality which is manifested in gambling, theft, strained relationships, and other forms of misconduct on the part of his fellow soldiers. His own supposed innocence diminishes as he begins to consume alcoholic beverages and become involved in fisticuffs with other Tommies. On a more optimistic note, Saint-Mandé meets an attractive and affable English nurse named Jean and, despite her marriage to a man many years her senior, strikes up a friendship with her, a relationship which helps to carry him through his ordeal on the Continent. He endures a gradual and general moral desensitisation before completing his training in England and near the end of Chapter Eight boards a ship that takes him across the English Channel to Le Havre.

Particularly intriguing in his creation of characters is a young Scottish soldier named Lamont. What the given name of this individual is we are not told, nor is it possible to ascertain with accuracy how much of himself the author inserted into his fictional namesake. The Lamont

of the text crops up in Chapter Six as one of the seven soldiers in training with whom Saint-Mandé shares a room in an old building next to a pub which they frequent. This fictional Lamont is described as "a young Scot from Glasgow; grocer's assistant, nineteen, refined-looking and a champion swearer" who also has a "splendid voice" (p. 72). Before leaving for France, he and some of his room-mates debate conscription. "Every boy ought to be called up as soon as a war breaks out", insists Lamont, a generalisation with which at least one of his fellows disagrees (p. 87). In this regard, at least, the Lamont of the text is quite at odds with the authorial Lamont of the early 1930s, although it is conceivable that the case for mass conscription more or less reflected the author's general attitude during the fervent days of 1914. As we shall see, during the course of the book Saint-Mandé undergoes a fundamental attitudinal shift, and it is conceivable that Lamont the author sought to use the character Lamont to voice a fairly commonly held belief at the outset of the war. A hot-tempered young man, the latter drinks heavily and is involved in fistfights with fellow British soldiers before being killed in battle.

Another curiosity in the pre-combat training phase of the plot involves an incident which unintentionally partly foreshadowed what would happen to H.P. Lamont in Pretoria in 1932. While training at Lanshore in the South of England, Saint-Mandé listens sympathetically to the tale of woe which an innkeeper's wife tells about her abusive spouse. Under Saint-Mandé's leadership, a party of four of them respond by hiring a car, kidnapping the alleged culprit, driving him to a remote spot, flogging him, and finally releasing him after he promises never again to beat his wife (pp. 52-53). The tawdry example of vigilante conduct, for which the young recruits escape with impunity, bears an uncanny resemblance to the violence to which Lamont was subjected, although it does not involve tarring and feathering, and it also differs from the disposition of the case in Pretoria, which resulted in the conviction of the four young Afrikaners who kidnapped Lamont. The similarities are not, of course, a case of life imitating art or *vice versa*. Obviously Lamont could not have known that he would endure a kidnapping, and there is no evidence that his assailants in the South African capital took their cue from the plot of *War, Wine and Women*.

Saint-Mandé's stint as a soldier and, briefly, a pilot in Belgium and France spans nearly four years, *i.e.* from late 1914 until shortly before the cessation of hostilities in November 1918. His description of the war focusses to a great extent on his exploits in it, interspersed with accounts of those of his comrades and his interaction with civilians not only in towns in those two countries but also in England during periods of convalescence. The general setting in which most of the plot is set is one of squalor in the trenches, death and mutilation during frequent shellings and exchanges of fire between British and German forces as they face each other at close range, suicidal

frontal attacks which also result in massive slaughter of enemy troops, administrative bungling on the part of the British command, and a gradual loss of faith in the war on the part of the persevering if demoralised Tommies who bear the brunt of the suffering. Lamont reproduces far too many such incidents to maintain readers' interest at a high level. The overall effect is narcotising. In this, perhaps, readers by analogy develop some of the apathy towards violence which Saint-Mandé insists that unrelenting exposure to fighting and death produce in the soldiers of the trenches. From a strategic viewpoint, there is scant progress in the fighting until after the arrival of American forces in 1917. For the most part, Saint-Mandé and his comrades repeatedly risk their lives while both taking and inflicting heavy casualties in what seems a senseless war.

In spite of the absurdity of it all and the elusiveness of victory, Saint-Mandé narrates a seemingly never-ending and arguably only marginally plausible series of heroic escapades in which he defies all odds in slaying large numbers of German soldiers with explosive devices, firearms, and a knife. His triumphs come at a high price. Repeatedly he suffers wounds, some of which are sufficiently serious to necessitate his evacuation to hospitals in France and England. Yet, apart from the final one, which costs him an arm (echoing the loss of limb which his ancestor Henri Saint-Mandé suffered while fighting for France in the early 1790s), they are not enough to convince this persevering warrior to quit. Repeatedly he insists on returning to the front, explaining to friends, officers, and relatives that he prefers the life of military action, notwithstanding its obvious tribulations, and the camaraderie of his fellow soldiers, to a bourgeois existence in England. This is the case even after marrying his beloved Jean (who has obtained a divorce from her first husband) late in the war and being trained as a fighter pilot in 1918. Severely injured in an aerial dogfight over France, Saint-Mandé loses his right arm (he is left-handed) and is taken to England, where he and Jean, together with their infant son, move into a country house three days before the Armistice is signed on 11 November 1918. Thus ends *War, Wine and Women* on a truncated note after its unnecessarily prolix and redundant plot has deadened, or at least diminished, interest in key themes.

Establishing Initial Innocence

No theme is more central to Lamont's novel than the loss of young - and particularly British - innocence during the war, but this pivotal matter, as we shall see in the following chapter, was apparently lost on readers in South Africa who dismissed the book as little more than a

condescending British attack on Afrikanerdom. A consideration of this vital matter is particularly germane to the controversy which erupted in Pretoria and elsewhere in South Africa over *War, Wine and Women* because, as we shall see in the following chapter, in that dispute offended Afrikaners repeatedly focussed their wrath on Lamont's comments about their (and their ancestors') moral peccadillos and lack of breeding. In fact, in this novel one finds a severe indictment of British moral degeneration which dwarfs Lamont's diatribes against the Voortrekkers and their descendants as morally deficient.

During the first few chapters following the account of Henri Saint-Mandé's escape from the French Revolution, he establishes Wilfred's as yet generally uncorrupted personality and behaviour. Nowhere is this youth portrayed as morally impeccable, but in any case he initially stands far from the downward spiral of immorality and disillusioinment which he soon follows through the war. Indeed, his road was to lead to Oxford, and in 1914, before having an opportunity to begin his studies, he has the "intention to become a professor" and thus be able to travel to exotic lands during the long university vacations (p. 25). Positive signs of youthful masculinity accompany his self-esteem. Looking at a mirror in August 1914, he judges himself to be "fit" and worthy of vanity, "for I was tall, perfectly proportioned, muscular, and handsome into the bargain" (p. 26). By contrast, many of the working-class recruits whom he encounters shortly thereafter bear signs of crudeness as they smoke and spit (p. 34). Their language at the recruiting office, moreover, is "largely slang and swear words" (p. 27), making Saint-Mandé "ashamed to stand among such a motley crew, most of whom exchanged the filthiest kind of badinage" (p. 28). Some of these dissolute souls are "drunk" and attempt to dance while holding bottles in their hands as they await a train (pp. 29-30). Not so our narrator - at this stage. Furthermore, Saint-Mandé puts considerable stock in his pedigree and emphasises that his maternal relatives in Scotland are "worthy people", albeit "extremely pious and rather narrow-minded" (p. 22). Christianity runs very strong along that branch of his family tree. Illustrating the point, his grandmother preaches a hellfire "sermon" to him after discovering that he has visited and eaten ice cream in an "Italian shop" in Dundee (pp. 22-23). Saint-Mandé's enlistment in the army is sincere and idealistic; he finds "great joy" in being able to enter a recruiting office shortly before it closes for the day (p. 27).

Initial naïveté about the war is also one of Saint-Mandé's traits in the first few chapters. When the fresh recruit is informed that he could have waited and joined a special regiment raised for "educated men", he replies that he did not mind being in a "rough crowd" because he believed "the war would not last more than two or three months" (p. 33). Saint-Mandé admits, however,

while staying in a training camp that "the coarseness and barbarity of my environment" have a depressing effect on him (p. 37). Small wonder that this economically privileged lad gratefully accepts the offer of an unknown youth of approximately his age to spend the night at his parents' home, where he avails himself of an opportunity to have a bath and make himself look "presentable" (p. 33).

Saint-Mandé's moral standards and attitudes are similarly quite idealistic as he begins to train for war. When he and his fellow recruits are being assigned blankets, he refuses to conform to the standard practice of bribing a stores clerk in order to receive a new one. Instead, Saint-Mandé upholds his principles and is rewarded with a "dirty blanket" which "stank abominably". In one of his first displays of obstinacy, he throws the repulsive article on the floor and simply takes a fresh one, evidence of righteous indignation which astounds no-one more than himself him as he considers his "temerity" (p. 38). Saint-Mandé stands initially four-square behind the national war effort and the public enthusiasm for intervention in Europe. Approximately a week before enlisting in London, he hears a "Wesleyan parson" speak in a local hall about "What we owe to Germany" and reacts by expressing his admiration of this clergyman's courage but dismissing him as "a tactless fool". "It appeared to me idiotic to acclaim what we owed to the enemy just after war had been declared", he recalls. "The first duty was to see the business through, and that would need all our strength, unity, energy and endurance" (p. 26). The overall picture of Saint-Mandé which emerges before and during the early stages of his military training is thus one in which a gifted but not yet worldly wise young man who has yet to emerge from his protected home environment and compromise with the ways of unregenerate humanity.

Dismantling Saint-Mandé's Innocence

Saint-Mandé's general innocence dissipates long before he embarks for France. Lamont adduces extensive evidence to demonstrate that the decline of moral standards and their replacement with inhumane attitudes and disillusionment are well underway before the youthful recruits see the trenches or engage in combat. Not their German foes, but rather the British themselves bear the responsibility for their own downward ethical spiral. The seeds of destruction, in other words, lie within; they do not have to be sown by the enemy in opposing trenches.

Rather than compromising the moral standards acquired in his childhood home by engaging in debauchery at Oxford, Saint-Mandé takes his initial steps down that path of

independence from parental supervision as a soldier in training. Accompanied by fellow recruits on a train to London, he gets his first taste of whisky when an inebriated soldier passes a bottle around. "I decided it wasn't worth while sticking to my teetotal principles at the expense of a riot and bloodshed" Saint-Mandé explains matter-of-factly (p. 41). The consumption of alcohol becomes a recurrent sign of debauchery in *War, Wine and Women* as these would-be combatants shatter Kitchener's *dictum* long before leaving British shores. Saint-Mandé sinks more deeply into the cult of drinking and explicitly turns away from his earlier scruples when he celebrates his eighteenth birthday on 5 November 1914 while still in England. Some of his mates propose to commemorate the occasion by visiting a pub called the White Horse. "I hesitated, as I had been a regular attendant at the local Band of Hope and had signed the pledge umpteen times to abstain from alcoholic liquors as beverages", he explains. Compromising principles on the altar of camaraderie, however, Saint-Mandé accompanies his mates to the White Horse and joins them in consuming round after round of beer. After eight pints, he is "completely drunk" (p. 73). The wages of this sin are a hangover the following morning (p. 74). That unpleasantry, however, does not prevent him from going a step further and purchasing whisky for himself and some of his fellow recruits long before they cross the English Channel (p. 82). Immediately before sailing, Saint-Mandé repairs to a pub for drinks "to clear my head" for that voyage (p. 119).

The teenaged soldier's initial recoiling at vulgar speech also falls victim to his surroundings. "I lost all revulsion to the foulest language; it became the norm", he recalls (p. 48). At Lanshore Saint-Mandé engages in his first fistfight by trading punches with "an uncouth-looking lout" in a lengthy match which Lamont uses nearly four pages to describe (pp. 43-47). Saint-Mandé's earlier pugilism was controlled boxing at school, but this brawl leaves him with a moderately bruised face and the satisfaction of having knocked out his opponent. Other fights follow, one of which leads to Saint-Mandé's first arrest (p. 55). Respect for public authority also wanes in his mind. Again acting in concert with other soldiers, he assaults a policeman who is struggling with a farm labourer. The recruits strip their victim and threaten to throw him into a pond but choose instead to hurl him into a dam and run for their barracks (p. 56).

Saint-Mandé also joins his fellow soldiers in their gambling and finds this pastime addictive: "I made up my mind to stop at midnight, but was still playing when the bugle sounded in the morning". His losses are considerable, at least relative to his modest remuneration as a soldier (p. 53). On the other hand, he appears to maintain his chastity in England. Very shortly before sailing to France, he encounters a harbour prostitute but elects to buy her a drink at a hotel bar rather than having intercourse with her (p. 119).

The most sobering moment for Saint-Mandé before his departure for the war-torn Continent comes when he encounters severely wounded British soldiers who are convalescing in Brighton. Conversing with a legless victim of the carnage, he "stared at him in amazement, beginning to realize that the horrors of war were of a kind one didn't usually contemplate when the bands played and the crowds cheered. The grim side of the picture was kept out of sight as much as possible, painted as it was in blood and composed of horrors indescribable" (p. 64). In the wake of this encounter with the harsh reality of the price of massive violence, Saint-Mandé discovers that not all the other recruits shared his initial idealistic motives for enlisting. A teacher named Sampson, for instance, has joined the army to escape his wife (p. 66), while sheer boredom with civilian life and the desire for excitement have prompted another to sign up (p. 77).

Having related all these and other accounts of his changed behavioural pattern, the narrator superfluously comments explicitly on how he has changed. "I had learnt more about life than I ever knew before, and had become inured to a harder and more brutal mode of existence than I had envisaged before leaving home", he summarises, emphasising that he does not regret enlisting (p. 57). He adds a few pages later that he and his mates were no longer captives of social norms: "Suddenly freed from the restraints of civilized life[,] we delighted to *épater le bourgeois* and appear dare-devils, swashbucklers who despised civilian decorum and cant" (p. 60). Saint-Mandé is not merely a rebel but a victim of lost moral norms existing in an existential vacuum: "With the loss of the little faith I once possessed[,] there remained no sense of right and wrong, beyond certain humdrum conventions. I was being tossed about in a sea of doubt and despair" (p. 76). This realisation leads him to an even harsher philosophical judgement about himself and his colleagues: "In the regiment we ceased to be human beings and became numbers. There was no reverence or even respect for human personality. A man was an instrument for carrying a rifle and pack. He was being rapidly transformed into a very efficient destructive agent–but he had no soul, no self-respect, no rights" (pp. 78-79). Much of what follows in *War, Wine and Women* reflects this attitudinal shift on the part of the narrator as he comments on the cheapness of human life in the trenches. What is particularly significant from an ethnic viewpoint at this stage, however, is Lamont's obvious perception of the dehumanisation of British soldiers being a product of the military life *per se*. Saint-Mandé pronounces his severe judgements before seeing combat but after several months of general military and infantry training in England. They are therefore not direct consequences of fighting between British and German soldiers. The ethnic twist on Lamont's concluding words of Chapter Six, which ends well before Saint-Mandé and his mates sail to France, is thus ironic and underscores that something from German nationalism and moral

nihilism had already invaded the British military mind: "All that we had been taught was a hollow sham, all our values were turned topsy-turvy, the gods of Treitschke and Nietzsche ruled the world" (p. 79). That Lamont could be severely critical of both English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans was made evident in the immediately preceding chapter of this study and will become even more clear in the following two. What is particularly significant in this regard is that even a moderately rigorous reading of *War, Wine and Women* reveals that his portrayal of his compatriots in the United Kingdom was also devastating. Stripped by the dogs of war of their social veneer, he insists, they are exposed as not at all superior to their foes on the battlefield. Again, this point would be lost in the heated debate in South Africa over *War, Wine and Women*. The matter becomes especially revealing when juxtaposed with Lamont's comments about the lack of refinement amongst Afrikaners.

Criticising British War Propaganda

Lamont underscores in *War, Wine and Women* his conviction that British propaganda was one factor which precipitated that nation's involvement in the First World War, but critics in South Africa never commented on this aspect of the novel's rhetoric. The young author does not isolate this catalyst, nor does he absolve the purveyors of nationalistic hatred and xenophobia in other countries. On the contrary, Lamont repeatedly emphasises that German propaganda also played a rôle in maintaining unnecessary international tensions and also highlights such factors as profiteering by the munitions industry and religious zealotry as contributing influences.

The narrator's encounter with British propaganda begins in August 1914. Reading several newspapers the day after returning to London from his holiday in Scotland, Saint-Mandé discovers in them that "the Germans were out to smash civilization, violate Belgian neutrality, and let loose on Europe the most hideous frightfulness their barbaric minds could invent" (p. 26). He responds by deciding to enlist. *En route* to his first training camp, he converses with an articulate German immigrant who identifies one cause of the current war hysteria as "the most unscrupulous journalistic bilge" but does not illustrate this accusation with any specific cases (p. 31). During his military training, Saint-Mandé hears the views of a chauvinistic innkeeper on whom the English public discourse about German behaviour has apparently made its mark: "First of all we must blot out the bloody Germans, every b_____ one of them. Then we'll settle them goddam Yanks an' show 'em who rules the waves" (p. 51).

A few months and approximately seventy pages of text pass before Saint-Mandé, eager to experience combat in Europe, prepares to cross the English Channel and ponders what he has heard during his long spell of training. He is surprisingly sophisticated and cynical at that early stage and distinguishes himself from the mass of his colleagues. "Most of the men believed in the justice of the cause for which they were going to fight and were, no doubt, to a large extent, victims of the bluff that was so generously dished out by politicians and a servile press", this would-be Oxonian reasons. By contrast, "I wondered just how much we were being bluffed, and whether any of the stories of German atrocities were true. I could not believe them to be such unmitigated rotters as they were painted in the newspapers". Again showing rather more sophistication than one can plausibly expect from a teenager, the narrator, clearly speaking from a later, more mature point of view, declares that "mob psychology is a curious branch of study and has shown how easy it is to stir up the hellish passions lying dormant in our hearts, so that a group will commit acts that the individual would never stoop to. . . . Woe to those who stir the masses to fury with its fratricidal slaughter on a colossal scale" (p. 120).

The reality of horrendously violent combat at close range erodes whatever illusions Saint-Mandé may nevertheless have carried across the Channel to France and Belgium. In one of his cautious experiments in multivocality, Lamont uses an epistolary device to humanise the German participants in the war and close the gap which he believes propaganda has created between them and the British. After Saint-Mandé kills a German officer and while he is convalescing in Hampshire, he reads letters he has taken from the body of that victim, endearing documents penned by his wife and four young children. One from the wife is especially poignant. She emphasises her general hatred of war and suggests that "if war makers would think of the women and children perhaps they would not declare war so readily" as the "idiots" who are enthusiastic about armed conflict. This invisible spouse then serves Lamont's purpose regarding propaganda by expressing that she has heard that the English torture their prisoners. "I wonder if that isn't simply an invention and no doubt the English tell the same tale about us to discourage deserters" (p. 165). The narrator thereby gains insight into the bilateral nature of wartime propaganda. "We were both dupes, both fighting like fiends for what we believed to be right, both victims of a system that permits the venal press, secret diplomacy, and those who make money out of war; all these form that detestable Moloch to which the youth of Europe are being sacrificed" (p. 165).

Saint-Mandé's general understanding of this general phenomenon takes on more specific flesh and blood through specific examples of propaganda as the war drags on without an end

in sight - at least in the eyes of the Tommies in the trenches. The tenacity of the opposition they were facing in Belgium undermined the plausibility of journalistic assertions of the enemy's lack of fortitude in battle. "Bravery is the monopoly of no nation", he avers, "and the British press did our men a disservice when it spread weird and wonderful tales about the alleged cowardice of the German army" (p. 199). The realisation that German soldiers sometimes cut the throats of Allied counterparts during raids strikes Saint-Mandé as sensible, given the exigencies of combat. Underscoring the point, a few pages after pondering the morality of this form of killing, he uses the same technique to dispatch two Germans (pp. 252, 257). Saint-Mandé also admits that on occasion he and his fellows shoot prisoners of war and wounded enemy soldiers (p. 287). He also reports that some Englishmen grouse about the "Huns" shelling churches during the war, but he excuses this, at least from a practical, military point of view, as the steeples were unsurpassed posts in which British officers routinely stationed artillery observers (p. 475). His explicitly stated conclusion drawn about comparative national morality in war is arguably superfluous and anomalous in a fictional context: "I am not trying to pretend that the Germans were all angels, far from it. But in the aggregate they were guilty of no more crimes than the French or British" (p. 329). When year after year scant progress is made at a great cost in human life on the fields of battle, the increasingly cynical Saint-Mandé dismissed what he read when "the papers out from home contained reports of villages captured, and readers were regaled with the usual falsehoods about the troops' anxiety to go over the top as often as possible". The reality of British strategy, he counters, was that "thousands of men were sacrificed for a blasted strip of worthless land" (pp. 299-300).

By 1917, Saint-Mandé can look back to the British public spirit of August 1914 as an odd attitudinal relic from the past which subsequent reality had rendered absurd:

> My mind went back to those days which seemed to belong to some far-off age, when the world was young and clean and pleasant. We held ourselves favoured beyond our deserts in being allowed to fight for justice, truth, and common decency in international affairs. We held all men, on our own side, of course, to be honest, truthful and honourable, especially the parsons, politicians, and tub-thumping orators of all kinds. We never suspected that the war would produce the most heartless collection of profiteers the world has ever seen, that munition workers and miners would, by strikes and threats of strikes, hold a pistol at the nation's head, and extort from the Treasury more in a day than we earned in a month.

> I closed my eyes and saw the ragged men with whom I had drilled in the early days of August 1914 . . . then saw them rotting on the wire and the profiteers waxing fat, making money out of the nation's extremity (p. 361).

The needless waste of life prompts Saint-Mandé and his colleagues in the field to curse the General Headquarters, "which in our opinion was composed of lunatics" (p. 263). Near the end of *War, Wine and Women*, however, the narrator qualifies this generalisation and grudgingly gives a moderately more generous assessment of the officer corps without relinquishing his bitterness. In a conversation with his wife Jean, Saint-Mandé concedes that "there are undoubtedly many fine officers, but the addle-brained nincompoop with three hairs on his upper lip, who thinks he is an ornament to the service, riles me so much that if I were a fellow officer I should find it almost impossible to be polite" (p. 538).

Criticising British Military Strategy and Ineptness

Another major theme in *War, Wine and Women* which Afrikaans critics uniformly overlooked was Lamont's critical treatment of British military strategy. During his four years as a soldier and pilot, Saint-Mandé frequently aims his critical rapier at various aspects of British military life which he clearly believes make the horrors of war even less tolerable and cost even more lives than otherwise would have been the case. He loses little time in striking early blows. When Saint-Mandé rushes to enlist at the beginning of the war, he hears that a "big fat sergeant" at one recruiting station is closing his office, notwithstanding a "throng" of volunteers waiting outside it (p. 27). Proceeding to another station, he and other recruits are given only "a most cursory [medical] examination" before being approved for what promised to be exacting military service (p. 28). Upon reaching his first training camp, Saint-Mandé discovers that apparently owing to inadequate preparation "no bedding was available[,] and that meant lying on the bare floor" (p. 35). The food which he and his fellow recruits are compelled to consume there also suggests unsatisfactory planning. Their potatoes are "liberally coated with grease", while the meat they are served is nearly raw. "We resembled nothing so much as a troop of hungry lions being fed by keepers in the Zoo", relates the narrator, who adds that his teeth were sufficiently sound to allow him "to tear my chunk to pieces" (pp. 36-37).

Lamont's attitudes towards the British officer corps and non-commissioned officers is ambivalent but certainly negative to a considerable degree. This, too, is established long before the action shifts to the Belgian-French theatre. Quickly disgusted with the bullying of a sergeant, rampant verbal abuse, unsavoury living conditions, and uniforms that made him and his comrades look like convicts, Saint-Mandé declares on the eve of his departure from his initial camp, "I saw a good deal that looked suspiciously like incompetence and criminal carelessness in the powers that were shaping my destiny, but perhaps I took a jaundiced view owing to the discomfort I had to put up with" (p. 42). At Lanshore, his second venue for training, he finds that the uniforms fit most of the diverse recruits so poorly that "it was enough to make the angels laugh" (p. 48). After Saint-Mandé's initial period in hospital while still in southern England, his training battalion is ordered to move, but precisely where its men are to go is uncertain. "Great was the confusion", recalls the narrator; "chaos reigned everywhere; there appeared to be a thousand commanders and as many conflicting orders" (p. 82). This confusion foreshadows what would be repeated endlessly on the battlefield.

The problems with fundamental logistics in England continue to bedevil the soldiers in Belgium and France. After Saint-Mandé and his fellows initially disembark after crossing the English Channel, "owing to some extraordinary blunder or carelessness no cooked meal was provided that night", so they resort to wine and cognac instead (p. 128). The inadequacy of rations becomes a daily fact of life for these men as they fight for their lives. The narrator succinctly describes the fare at one point: "We were getting nothing but hard biscuits, bully, and desiccated vegetables, in insufficient quantities" (p. 212). Compounding the severe difficulty inherent in feeding an army in the trenches, insobriety at one point leads to hunger. Saint-Mandé relates how on one day when he and his mates had to rise at four o'clock they were unable to eat most of the day, "the cooks having got drunk, and the rain making it impossible to light a fire". Eventually they received from one of the scullions "a dixie of watery soup" (pp. 417-418). On another note, while convalescing yet again in an English hospital, Saint-Mandé discovers when his parents visit him that very few of the parcels they have sent him daily actually reached him. He concludes nonchalantly, "Oh well, they weren't wasted. So my hungry Tommies wolfed them" (p. 424).

Lamont saves some of his most savage criticism for what he believed was the fault of British officers in unnecessarily heightening the already lofty number of casualties suffered in mindless assaults on the firmly entrenched Germans. One inane attack included using gas when the enemy forces were upwind. Commenting on his comrades whose lives were consequently snuffed out,

Saint-Mandé remarks that "the gas blew back on them and Jerry simply mowed them down as they rushed forward over No Man's Land". He adds superfluously, "The attack appeared to have been bungled in every way, and to this day I cannot understand why it should have taken place at all" (p. 232). Such offensives were, to his mind, suicidal exercises in futility. Saint-Mandé must shake his head in disbelief whenever he hears of one that is imminent. "I had seen enough of frontal attacks to realize that few of those marching men would survive the onslaught, and of those who came through, previous few would live to see the end of the offensive, should it be prolonged as rumours promised" (p. 282). Elsewhere, he vilifies the obstinacy and callousness of officers who condoned such butchery. One passage in Chapter Seventeen is particularly illustrative:

> The Germans brought out their machine-guns and mowed down the running figures. Many reached the wire and threw themselves against it. But they were slaughtered before they could use their wire cutters and were left hanging on the wire like scarecrows. It was like attacking a furnace by throwing butter at it. I reflected that those lifeless bundles would in a few days make the air more pestilential, and their relatives would be informed that they died like heroes. It ought to be possible for competent local observers to call off an attack when it is obviously doomed to failure. In the attack of which I speak, four battalions, comprising over two thousand men, went over the top, and barely fifty crawled back, and most of the survivors were badly wounded. One officer cursed the useless waste of life and another replied mildly: "It's no bloody use crying over spilt milk. With a little luck the wire would have been properly cut and then we would have won a brilliant victory" (p. 320).

Censuring the Religious Establishment

Lamont repeatedly takes to task Christianity, especially in its organised British forms. This recurrent theme is doubly significant in *War, Wine and Women*. On the one hand, through it Lamont identifies what he believes is a politically purloined and morally compromised variety of the Christian faith as one of the institutions which helped to prod Britain into war and continued to sacrifice its integrity on the altar of anti-German propaganda. On the other hand, Lamont's

stinging criticism of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, and especially its ministerium, is not an isolated dimension in this novel, but one which can profitably considered in juxtaposition with his much stronger denunciation of the Church of England.

It should be emphasised at the outset that the narrator is not completely alienated from his birthright Christian legacy, notwithstanding his rejection of his Scottish maternal grandmother's zealous piety and his repeated remarks about losing his faith even before completing military training in England. In times of need, however, Saint-Mandé exemplifies the *dictum* that "there are no atheists in foxholes". After temporarily leaving but soon thereafter having to return to the "hell" of the Somme, he and his comrades are exposed to the "hellish fury" of a shelling. Memories from his distant past return as Saint-Mandé bargains for his life: "I muttered a prayer my mother had taught me as a child. I asked God to protect me, and promised, as I had often done before under similar circumstances, to lead a better life if I were spared. I probably realized at the time that I had no intention of keeping my promise, but God was a kind of talisman with whom it was well to keep in touch" (p. 351). Later in the war, in March 1918, Saint-Mandé describes as the worst bombardment he has ever experienced and is convinced that he is virtually *in extremis*. The narrator reports that he felt like a convict in the United States of America sitting in the electric chair waiting for the current to be switched on. This predicament elicits a haggling *kyrie* from his lips: "O God have mercy on me, O Christ have mercy on me, a miserable sinner; spare me and I vow to turn from sin and lead a new life devoted to thy service" (p. 522).

Nowhere does Lamont give a full account of Saint-Mandé's religious beliefs. For the most part, the reader finds fragments of a *non credo* but certainly nothing approaching a statement of faith. Generally disillusioned with organised religion, the young soldier apparently has no consistent system of religious beliefs in a conventional, British Christian sense. At times he expresses the appeal of an unarticulated pantheism. On one occasion in 1915, for example, as feelings of personal guilt rack his conscience after he has killed a German and found among his victim's belongings letters from his wife and photographs of his children, Saint-Mandé enters a village church in Belgium and approaches its altar, hoping to pray. He cannot, however, and turns away, believing that to have done so would have been "a great mockery". Instead, Saint-Mandé seeks spiritual fulfilment by wandering through meadows and lanes nearby, expressing as he walks his caricatured perception of congregational life he has experienced. "Surely one is nearer God in the open air than in dingy, gloomy churches where everything combines to make one dismal, from the mournful tunes to the affected droning sermon", the narrator argues. He longs for a new religion of nature: "Let us hope the religion of the future will be a happy one, finding its

God among the birds and flowers, instead of the dark temples designed to keep a monopoly of God's attention, and the hide-bound creeds which must make God have a good laugh" (pp. 166-167).

Repeatedly, though for the most part during the first half of his narrative, Saint-Mandé takes the church to task for its support of the British war effort. Near the beginning of Chapter Four, he catalogues through a Prussian-born British subject the causes of the conflict, numbering such factors as "secret diplomacy, fierce competition in armaments, widespread popular ignorance and prejudice" as well as "cursed financiers and profiteers" as the chief culprits. This immigrant, who bears the archetypical German surname Moltke, then considers the stance of the church in 1914. "What has organized Christianity done to avert this bloody massacre? Has it ever had the courage to denounce murder, whether the assassins are in uniform or not? Has it tried to impress upon us that Christ meant what He said in the Sermon on the Mount?" he asks naïvely. Apparently not realising that all of these questions could be answered affirmatively, at least with qualification, he resorts instead to anticlericalism which manifests his anger and disillusionment: "The modern parson couples piety and material success in such a way as to make a travesty of true piety and a god of success" (pp. 31-32).

Lamont seems to have been quite convinced that in general the British clergy enthusiastically supported the national war effort. When Saint-Mandé meets Daphne, the daughter of an Anglican priest, before leaving for France, she admits that her father pandered to the wealthy and "never told the rich scoundrels that there was anything wrong with their lives or that they should try to carry out the Sermon on the Mount...". No doubt owing to the hypocritical example he has set, Daphne echoes the well-known Marxist *dictum* that religion is an "opiate". Her father, she adds, was now "a chaplain in the army, and goes round with the fiery cross, spouting in the base camps that the war is a holy crusade" (pp. 113-114). The image of the war as a Christian *jihad* in the eyes - and mouths - of the British clergy crops up repeatedly in *War, Wine and Women*. When a chaplain visits the military hospital in Hampshire where Saint-Mandé is convalescing, he mouths what the recuperating soldier dismisses as "the usual bunk about fighting for God, King and Country" and asks whether Saint-Mandé is eager to return to the theatre of war "to have another cut at the Hun". The war-weary narrator dismisses him as a "crass idiot" (p. 162). Late in the war, Saint-Mandé and his brother visit an Anglican priest who was an acquaintance of their father. The neophyte novelist Lamont burdens this clergyman with negative signs, describing superficially his "fat face", "slightly bandy" legs, and large, fat hands (p. 444). His chauvinistic ardor borders on the surreal: "It is remarkable how war brings out one's best qualities",

he declares. "Who would have thought the common people possessed such courage and tenacity? You know[,] this war has been England's salvation. We were getting careless, materialistic and indifferent to spiritual matters". Far from being the scourge of the world, this "complacent and smug" cleric insists, warfare is God's work which will lead to a great revival (p. 445).

One of Lamont's few positive comments about organised religion occurs in Chapter Fourteen, when Saint-Mandé visits a monastery on a hilltop in Belgium. This isolated institution has some appeal to the battered young soldier. Within its walls, "the monks went about their daily tasks as if the world were still at peace". He ponders monasticism from various angles and allows it a favourable judgment. "One is tempted to condemn such a mode of life as useless, and yet it may be more truly in harmony with the designs of the Architect of the Universe than the lives of men who sweat and strive to make money, working like horses and amusing themselves like monkeys in a way that is reminiscent of the mediæval dance of death", the narrator muses. In the secular world, by contrast, "the intervals between wars are spent in paying for past conflicts and preparing for those of the future" (p. 247).

What Manner of Heroism?

Saint-Mandé is a relatively complex character not only in terms of his personal pedigree but also with regard to his seemingly contradictory attitudes towards war and his own participation in it. To a great degree, however, he fits one model which theoreticians have established for fiction about the First World War. To elucidate this, let us return briefly to the categories of wartime heroism which Onions established in his doctoral thesis at Oxford. He described the "cultural heroism" of a bygone era in which individual warriors, such as those in the *Iliad*, found their personal fulfilment and rewards in heroic action. This is quite foreign to most fiction of the First World War. Secondly, in "social heroism" the individual puts himself at risk in order to serve a supposedly higher cause, such as the interests of his nation or adherence to moral principles. This category, which is evident in much of the literature pertaining to the British Empire during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, echoes in the opening pages of *War, Wine and Women*. Most significant for our understanding of Lamont's book, however, is Onions' third type, namely existential heroism. Here the individual lives in an intensely precarious situation near the border separating life from death and pays little or no attention to lofty ideals. He exercises free will to some extent, but not purposefully in the service of the national cause which has placed him

into his predicament. This general context became virtually normative in the literature about the Great War as it describes how men continued to fight bravely long after their initial idealism succumbed to seemingly endless savagery in the trenches and the conflict dragged on with no end in sight. Onions generalises that this body of literature "destroyed the hero even while it asserted his existence and attraction. In effect, it dismantled the social hero and left intact the existential one".[12]

Saint-Mandé is a nearly perfect exemplar of the existential hero type, a self-serving man who contradicts romantic notions of British military heroism far more than he confirms them. To be sure, at the outset of the war his youthful idealism is intact as he enlists in the army, convinced that in a few months of service he can make a significant contribution to the re-establishment of morality in international relations. As we have seen in considerable detail in the sections about "Criticising British War Propaganda" and "Criticising British Military Strategy and Ineptness", however, Saint-Mandé's naïveté and innocence begin to crumble during his months of military training in England and virtually die out after he participates in combat in Belgium. He nevertheless presses on and, notwithstanding a series of injuries and certain disciplinary infractions which lead to trouble with the military police and cost him his status as a non-commissioned officer, he soon becomes and remains until forced by the loss of an arm to quit near the end of the war a highly successful soldier who repeatedly eludes death and inflicts many casualties on the German forces. Yet the narrator makes it clear that this is little more than a matter of survival and a love of excitement. Saint-Mandé respects and perceives the humanity of his German adversaries and believes he has much in common with them. On all sides, he eventually sees, propaganda has duped the combatants. He knows that he has opportunities to remove himself from the senseless butchery and remain in England, but rather than availing himself of them he returns to the fields of battle, loathing life in the trenches, no longer believing in the British national cause, and knowing that his chances of survival are not particularly good.

Saint-Mandé's perseverance under these circumstances is nearly incomprehensible and, in the eyes of some, perhaps implausible. He denies that moral convictions drive him on, particularly while he is in Belgium and France. "One often reads highfalutin accounts of philosophical meditations on the battle-field", he recalls later. "For my part I lived like a brute. My mind was numbed and incapable of any thought, beyond brooding over the fiendish discomforts we had to endure" (p. 407). While convalescing in England in 1917, Saint-Mandé has considerably more time for reflection, but again he reveals that his motivation is entirely subjective as he ponders his motives and his future:

> I found myself trying to analyse my state of mind, and wondered why I was going back to the trenches so calmly, almost eagerly, after having been so desperately anxious to get away from them. It may have been that my whole being craved for excitement and action. Then again I was afraid to face the future, and the life at the front was so exacting and uncertain that one had little or no time to think about anything but the task in hand. In spite of my dislike of killing men I thirsted for adventure, and loathed the dismal drills and parades in English camps. The best men were in France, either under the sod or holding the line, and one felt proud to be with such men (pp. 451-452).

Even after marrying Jean and suffering yet another serious injury in 1918, Saint-Mandé refuses to quit, preferring, as he explains to his wife, to be with unpretentious, down-to-earth soldiers whom he respects and accepts as they are. Acknowledging that many of them are "terribly rough and uncouth", he adds that "they are also sublime in their stoicism, comradeship and dogged courage, under conditions so ghastly that civilians will never be able to visualize them" (p. 538). Besides, as Saint-Mandé declares unabashedly to an officer when asked why he wishes to return to France as a pilot, "it must be rather thrilling, and having had enough of the war on the ground I would like to experience what it's like in the air" (p. 540). These explanations, too, fit almost perfectly the existential heroism context as Onions defines it.

Diatribes Regarding South Africa

The controversial dialogue about Afrikaners and the Dutch Reformed Church do not begin to occur until Chapter Sixteen, which covers events in mid-1916, *i.e.* approximately a year and a half after Saint-Mandé's initial tour of duty in Belgium and France has commenced. The narrator meets a new member of the battalion, "a tall, dark individual" who had been released from hospital. Identified by name only as Danesford, he is replete with negative signs which immediately cast aspersions on his character: "He was an absolute dare-devil, had been wounded three times, and had a fearful scar from his right temple across his nose to the lower part of the left jaw. It pulled his mouth somewhat out of shape and gave him a savage expression". Lamont also directly establishes this new character's lack of scruples: "I soon discovered also that he drank like a fish, swore like a Billingsgate porter, was a thorough reprobate and had many ways of

obtaining money, the least dishonest of which was borrowing and forgetting to pay back" (p. 292). The negative description of Danesford is typical Lamontian overkill of the sort which repeatedly burdens *War, Wine and Women*. Furthermore, Lamont emphasises that Danesford's experience in South Africa came hard on the heels of a scandal in which he apparently sired a child out of wedlock in England while still a teenager and was consequently sent out there in about 1902 to minimise the embarrassment of the affair for his family of origin (p. 294). Everything Danesford says in the wake of this description must consequently be taken *cum grano salis*. For good measure, after Danesford utters his most damaging lines, the narrator completes the bracketed destruction of his credibility by relating how on the same evening Danesford is caught brawling in a pub with a presumably French "lout" who has got his goat by defaming English soldiers in general and suggesting that the next war would be between France and England. As the incensed veteran of South African life and Saint-Mandé walk home from their night of carousing, Danesford sings various "obscene songs" until finding one that the two men both know and could therefore bellow "lustily" (p. 299).

In a one-sided conversation with Saint-Mandé, Danesford voices expressions well lubricated by the contents of a bottle of wine he has emptied without removing that container from his lips. Again, his credibility is explicitly compromised. The narrator indicates quite plausibly that he has considered emigrating to South Africa after the conclusion of the war and asks Danesford about unspecified "prospects" there. His embittered conversation partner replies that for Englishmen they are "nil" and proceeds to explain this extreme judgement. The roots of the British predicament, Danesford stresses, lie in recent history. Echoing a widely held sentiment in the wake of the Second Anglo-Boer War, he declares, "The Dutchman hates us like hell and will never forgive". Danesford recalls further, "I saw the closing stages of the South African war and admired the Boer as a clean fighter. But there my admiration ends". Heaping one unqualified stereotypical accusation upon another, this malcontent generalises that "he will never learn anything and will never forget anything". Danesford then shifts from generic ethnic vilification to anticlericalism, asserting that Afrikaners are "ruled by the *predikants*, and they are the bloody limit. Narrow-minded, intolerant, selfish, harsh and unspiritual, they rule the dorps with a rod of iron. They have as much power as the Catholic priests in Ireland". Danesford's *syllabus errorum* continues to grow during his conversation with Saint-Mandé. Particularly vexing to him is the unwillingness of many Afrikaners to put the 1899-1902 war behind them, ostensibly choosing instead to nurture memories of its atrocities, including the concentration camps into which large numbers were herded as part of Kitchener's campaign to break the back of the bitter end resistance.

The camps, in Danesford's logic of self-justification, were a blessing to many Afrikaners, because in them British medical personnel had the opportunity to impart lessons concerning personal hygiene. This was crucial to ethnic education, because "the back-veld Boer bathes only for baptism, marriage and burial. He has no notions about sanitation and often uses his bedroom as a latrine" (p. 295).

Turning back the pages of history, Lamont then voices through Danesford vilifying remarks about the Voortrekkers. These comments, made during the early stages of planning to commemorate the centenary of the Great Trek, could only have riled many descendants of the migrants of the 1830s. The Voortrekkers, he avers, "were, on the whole, a pretty poor lot. Many were illiterate boors, surly and morose". Lamont follows this with a strike at the heart of Afrikaans racism: Their favourite pastime was begetting children, both with their wives and their numerous black concubines" (pp. 295-296). Not only were the Voortrekkers guilty of miscegenation in Lamont's catalogue of sins, they were also hypocrites. On the one hand, they insisted on obtaining freedom for themselves, but at the same time they "proceeded to enslave every black man they could get hold of" (p. 296).

Much of the remainder of Danesford's comments about Afrikanerdom is not plausibly that of a poorly educated fictional character but the insertion of authorial opinion. He pronounces, for example, that "the white man's record in South Africa is a record of theft, murder, and oppression" (p. 296). The unmistakable words of a university lecturer follow: "Many of them go to the States, get a cheap doctorate and an American accent, after which they return to the land of their birth, and show their gratitude to their mentors [*i.e.* British South Africans] by doing everything in their power to get rid of them" (p. 296).

Danesford voices other strong opinions about South African Jews milking the country dry (a threadbare ethnic metaphor which also crops up in Cloete's *Turning Wheels*) and tense relations between whites and blacks in South Africa. Missionaries are targets of Danesford's wrath. The propagation of Christianity, this unreliable informant tells Saint-Mandé, has produced negative results, especially by eroding individual moral accountability: "All he learns is that he will always be forgiven, so the so-called Christian native is usually the biggest liar and thief you could find" (p. 297).

In the last ten pages of *War, Wine and Women*, Lamont makes further expository remarks about contemporary South Africa which again reveal more about his perceptions in Pretoria than those of a young soldier during the Great War. While training to become a pilot during the latter half of 1918, Saint-Mandé befriends a South African named Walters and takes him

on a tour of economically blighted sites in London. The visitor finds the deprivation there disturbing. "Tell me why the hell you send thousands of pounds yearly to save the poor blacks in South Africa when you have here in this greatest city the foulest slums in the world?" he asks. When Saint-Mandé suggests that the answer may lie in the assumed fact that "the slum dwellers are Christians while the niggers are heathens", Walters counters that "charity begins at home" and launches into a threadbare diatribe against missionary endeavours. He reproduces the colonial accusation, frequently recorded by nineteenth and early twentieth-century missionaries in South Africa, that missionaries "tell the nigger he is as good as the white man, and [thereby] do a hell of a lot of harm". Walters also echoes the stereotypical assertion of the supposedly insouciant indigene in his natural habitat and links this to what he believes are the baneful effects of evangelisation: "In their kraals they are perfectly happy and honest. A Christian native is as a rule the laziest, most untruthful swab you could imagine" (pp. 546-547).

In a transparent authorial intrusion reflecting Lamont's years in Pretoria while the Hertzog government was expanding its "civilised labour policy" which reserved certain categories of employment to people of European descent, the narrator states that as a result of his conversation with Walters "it struck me that the whites in South Africa were alarmed at the prospect of the negro ever claiming economic justice, for the inflated wages paid to white artisans depended for their continuance on negro serfdom" (p. 547).

Lamont then takes another gratuitous swipe at Afrikanerdom. Walters, who explains that his mother is "Dutch" while his father is "Scotch", asserts that "the Afrikander is a curious person, religious in a narrow, intolerant way, lacking a sense of humour, and very vindictive". Lamont uses this character to voice at greater length his negative attitude towards the Dutch Reformed ministerium which Danesford has already mouthed in cryptic form: "They are the real rulers of South Africa", claims Walters, who adds that one of his uncles was in the ranks of this profession until he "dared to proclaim from the pulpit that the 1914 rebellion was wrong. He was hounded from his church and died in exile of a broken heart". The disillusioned South African concludes his anticlerical tirade with a crescendo of bitter notes: "I would rather trust myself to the tender mercies of a gang of brigands than to the Dutch Reformed Church *predikants*. They have no mercy, no charity, no human kindness in their miserable hearts" (p. 547).

The narrator records other scattered comments about South Africa which shed a bit of additional light on his racial prejudices and his perception of those then prevalent amongst people of European descent in that country. Walking near Péronne in northern France, Saint-Mandé hears a group of "negroes" singing while they were repairing a road. Their demeanour

confirms his ingrained attitude about insouciant black people and causes him to contrast their emotional state with that of his own race. "Our so-called civilization has made us morose, we are so intent on securing enough money to make us happy that we become warped in the struggle, and lose whatever capacity for happiness we may have had", he generalises. By contrast, "The blacks have remained young in spirit, and without our ambitions are also exempt from our cares" (p. 518).

Saint-Mandé then remarks that after the end of the war he commented to an unspecified friend favourably about blacks' singing ability. This person had replied, "How could you waste your time listening to bloody niggers?" The narrator insists that this condescending attitude is "happily rare in Europe, but common in America and South Africa". Whether he has first-hand experience with those countries is not disclosed. In any case, the narrator dismisses it as absurd: "It is curious how the most drunken, degraded, and stupid white believes himself superior to the most cultured and enlightened black" (p. 518). Again, when read against the backdrop of Lamont's unhappy years in Pretoria, this commentary about racial attitudes is clearly a didactic authorial intrusion which relates much more to the white South African mind than to a young soldier's experiences in the Great War.

For the most part Lamont's intrusions about contemporary South Africa have virtually no artistic value and are conspicuously long segments of a personal vendetta which thematically are disharmonies in the text of *War, Wine and Women*. His efforts to fit them into it are contrived and detract from their credibility. Read in the context of Lamont's disillusioning experiences in the Union of South Africa during the Hertzog era, they are all transparent manifestations of his discontent with its contemporary political scene, troubled race relations, and many of the Afrikaners with whom he interacted generally on the streets of Pretoria and particularly its authoritarian administration, with which he would engage in a professionally devastating controversy less than a year after the publication of his book.

Conclusion

It hardly needs to be emphasised that the general depiction of the Voortrekkers and their descendants in *War, Wine and Women* placed these pioneers and, by extension, Afrikaners in general almost diametrically contradicted much of what one could find in antecedent Dutch and Afrikaans historical reconstructions of the Great Trek. That the reception of the present volume in Afrikaans

circles would consequently differ enormously it did not take the brains of Lloyd George to predict; how and why many Afrikaners would react so vehemently to this work and its author will be discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, when read against the backdrop of Lamont's participation in public debates in Pretoria during the early 1930s, it becomes obvious that *War, Wine and Women* was not merely a "war book" in which he related his experiences in France and Belgium but also a text which reflects his troubled relations with Afrikaners and his disillusionment with contemporary South Africa generally. These latter dimensions, as we shall see in Chapter VIII, were developed much more fully in Lamont's next book, ironically titled *Halcyon Days in Africa.*

One aspect of Lamont's derogatory comments about Afrikaners past and present which is particularly striking when considered in the broader context of his narrative of the Great War is that several of these remarks also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to his depiction of British men at war. Like the Afrikaners, the Tommies of *War, Wine and Women* are often filthy, quite capable of nurturing ethnic hatred, and engage in promiscuous sexual relationships. Their commitment to their birthright Christian traditions is generally weak, and to some extent the Anglican clergy are not humble servants of Christ but authoritarian promoters of war. Yet these parallels, as we shall see in Chapter VII, were almost uniformly overlooked by angry detractors of *War, Wine and Women*, who focussed their critical attention almost exclusively on the emotionally charged issues of personal hygiene, miscegenation, and anticlericalism.

Notes

1. John Onions, *English Fiction and Drama of the Great War, 1918-39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 23.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

3. Steven Kirk Trout, "'The Old Trench Mind': History and Creative Representation in the War Books of 1929 and 1930" (Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Kansas, 1993).

4. Onions, *English Fiction and Drama of the Great War, 1918-39*, p. 53.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51. Onions adduces these statistics without verification. In his published study, he refers to only a minority of the British "war books" published during the late 1920s and early 1930s. If his figures are accurate, they underscore an enormous if relatively short-lived literary interest in the First World War. The sheer quantity of this production is in itself significant.

6. Douglas Jerrold, *The Lie about the War. A Note on Some Contemporary War Books* (London: Faber & Faber, 1930), pp. 5-10.

7. Cyril Falls, *War Books. A Critical Guide* (London: Peter Davies, Limited, 1930), pp. vii-xii.

8. Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: a Study of the Literature of the Great War* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1965), pp. 195-198.

9. Andrew Rutherford, *The Literature of War. Five Studies in Heroic Virtue* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978), pp. 1-2, 10, 85-86.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

11. "'War, Wine, and Women'. The Author Tells Why he Wrote It", *Pretoria News*, 5 April 1932, p. 4.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

Chapter VII

Academic Freedom *vs.* Afrikaner Nationalism: The Consequential Strife over *War, Wine and Women*

In Chapters II and III we traced the unfolding of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers and its intertwining with increasingly fervent Afrikaner nationalism during the first few decades of the twentieth century as well as the political cauldron in which Lamont conducted his career as a lecturer in French at the University of Pretoria. Given the heightened ethnic sensitivities of many Afrikaners during this period, it is not surprising in retrospect that the deprecating remarks about the Voortrekkers, their Afrikaans-speaking descendants, and the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church in *War, Wine and Women* would arouse the ire of some Afrikaners who identified with and lionised the Voortrekkers. And hostile reactions eventually came, though not for many months after Lamont's book was initially distributed in the Union of South Africa. The hostility quickly mushroomed into a bitter public controversy which gained national and international attention, led to a physical assault on the young British immigrant author and his dismissal from the staff of the University of Pretoria, and ended in the transformation of that institution from a bilingual one into an Afrikaans *volksuniversiteit*.

The Lamont case was never completely forgotten. It is recounted superficially in the standard history of the University of Pretoria,[1] and in 1972, forty years after the incident, Dian Joubert published a brief compilation of extracts from three South African newspapers which related to the event.[2] When the eminent historian Professor F.A. van Jaarsveld of the same institution was tarred and feathered in March 1979 during a lecture in which he questioned the wisdom of commemorating the Battle of Blood River as a national holiday, some commentators noted that the Lamont case had provided one tawdry precedent for such physical abuse of academics who had the temerity to challenge the icons of Afrikaner nationalism. Yet the contextual significance of the 1932 episode remains unanalysed, and many of its most significant details have never been documented in historical literature. In the present chapter I shall survey its mixed critical reception in both British and South African English as well as in Afrikaans circles and recreate from hitherto untapped sources the controversy which ensued and eventually drove the young lecturer and author both from his position at the University of Pretoria and the Union of South Africa. Particular attention will be paid to the crescendo of nationalistic fervour amongst the descendants of the Voortrekkers who perceived in Lamont's fiction unwarranted denigration

of their ancestors and the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church. The hostile and eventually violent reactions of many Afrikaners at the University of Pretoria and elsewhere, it will be seen, stood in marked contrast to the defence of the principle of academic and artistic freedom which many English speakers and indeed a small number of Afrikaners marshalled as pivotal in this case.

International Critical Reception

Critical reception of *War, Wine and Women* in London was not particularly favourable. Writing in *The Times Literary Supplement*, for example, an anonymous reviewer thought Saint-Mandé had bestowed a mixed blessing on the reading public. On the one hand, he generously praised the volume as "extremely readable and exciting" with a plot sufficiently captivating "to keep one's attention and also cause one to consider it with some care". This reviewer also enumerated several demerits, among the most conspicuous of which were the implausibly stilted dialogue, the inconsistencies in the degree of specificity in authorial descriptions of military actions and personal conduct, and what he obliquely referred to as the bad "taste" of the text. He did not anticipate the future furore about the book by commenting on the depiction of any ethnic groups.[3]

Some Anglophone South African literary warmly endorsed *War, Wine and Women*. Professor Max Drennan, then head of the Department of English at the University of the Witwatersrand, for example, called Saint-Mandé "emphatically a man who can write" and an obviously "scholarly, cultivated man" when he reviewed it in *The Rand Daily Mail*. Indeed, Drennan thought *War, Wine, and Women* on par with Hans Bringolf's *Feu le lieutenant Bringolf*, Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* and Paolo Monelli's *Le scarpe al sole*. He concluded that it was "emphatically a book to be bought and placed on the shelf of great war books".[4] Writing in a less critical vein, an anonymous reviewer in the *Pretoria News* acknowledged that the city finally boasted a "successful" novelist who, in contrast to other local authors who had concentrated on "uninspiring topics such as philosophy, biblical criticism, economics, banking, philology, native affairs, ecclesiastical history, with an occasional dash of poetry, drama, and biography", had tackled an engaging subject. He introduced *War, Wine and Women* as a realistic and comprehensive recreation of the horrors of war whose "feature" was the "unvarnished language" of the text. This journalist revealed that "Wilfred Saint-Mandé" was the pseudonym of someone who had written for the *Pretoria News* "from time to time" but refused to disclose his identity. Instead, he mused that readers'

curiosity would prompt "an interesting little exploration which can be pursued with pleasure and profit".[5] It is noteworthy that Anglophone reviewers of *War, Wine and Women* rarely commented on those segments of the book which Afrikaners would find outrageous.

The Genesis of a Conspiracy against Lamont?

Some details of the origins of the witch-hunt and its possible political motivations may never be known, but in any case by March 1932 there were suspicions in some quarters that Saint-Mandé was Lamont. Part of the pertinent evidence, particularly the content and chronology of the correspondence in question, indicates that the ranks of the suspicious included members of the provincial government and the administration of the University of Pretoria, and that the two camps co-operated to expose Lamont and purge him from their midst. On 14 March the Administrator of the Transvaal, veteran National Party politician J.S. Smit, who sat on the Council of the University of Pretoria, informed A.E. du Toit, the rector of the university, that "in Pretoria word rond vertel dat die skrywer Wilfred Saint-Mande [*sic*] niemand anders is dan die Heer H. Lamont, Sr. Lektor in Frans aan onse Universiteit". Contending obliquely that the matter could cause considerable harm to the interests of that institution, he requested the rector to ascertain whether the rumour was correct and suggested that in light of the gravity of the matter it should be on the agenda of the next sitting of the Provincial Council.[6]

Du Toit dutifully enquired of Lamont in writing almost immediately about the matter and requested a reply within three days.[7] Lamont answered on 16 March and, without addressing directly the issue of his rôle in *War, Wine and Women* declared, "I am at a loss to understand why such a communication should be addressed to me".[8] Clearly irritated by what he apparently regarded as Lamont's evasiveness, Du Toit fired back an angry reply demanding an unambiguous response by the following day.[9] Lamont's answer to this second request was dually significant, because in it he broached the vital question of academic freedom and made a disingenuous statement in what in retrospect was a transparent effort to relieve the pressure that had been placed on him. "I repudiate the right of any individual to seek to probe into the purely personal affairs of any member of staff", he declared on 18 March. "I have been advised that, legally, I should be perfectly justified in refusing to furnish any information of the kind required". Lamont then ventured fatefully far out on thin ice by suggesting that "in the interests of peace and harmony you may inform your correspondent that I am <u>not</u> the author of the book mentioned".[10]

Lamont's denial and appeal to legal authority evidently substantiated Smit's and Du Toit's suspicions about his authorship. Smit informed the rector that the young lecturer's confidential reply of 18 March (which Du Toit had immediately forwarded to him) was unsatisfactory and that Lamont must be requested to submit one which could be used - presumably as evidence in a case against him. Indicative of the urgency which Smit, with Du Toit's co-operation, attached to the matter, his letter to this effect was also dated 18 March.[11] Lamont, however, was in no hurry to concede his authorship. He waited until 28 March before informing Du Toit in writing that he was "not in a position to supply the information" which had been requested of him a fortnight earlier. At the same time, he repeated his opposition to "an attempt to probe into the purely personal affairs of a member of staff".[12]

The Afrikaans Public Campaign against Lamont

In the meantime, other Afrikaners had also taken exception to *War, Wine and Women*. The chairwoman of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie*, a Mrs Broers, who was the warden of the Women's Hostel at the University of Pretoria, read excerpts of the book to delegates at its congress in Pietersburg on 31 March. She found especially offensive the assertions by certain characters that "the backveld Boer bathes only for baptism, marriage and burial. He has no notion about sanitation and often uses his bedroom as a latrine" and that the favourite pastime of the Voortrekkers had been "begetting children, both with their wives and their numerous black concubines". She noted that Afrikaners had not raised an effective voice against the jingoistic assertions of the erstwhile editor of the *Pretoria News*, Vere Stent, and wondered whether the delegates would repeat that error. They responded by passing a motion requesting the Minister of the Interior, D.F. Malan, to suppress the book and determine who had written it.[13]

This action brought the matter to public attention and touched off an often acrimonious debate, the epicentre of which was in Pretoria but whose shock waves reverberated throughout much of South Africa. Generally speaking - though with noteworthy exceptions - editors of Afrikaans newspapers, their readers, and Afrikaans students and members of the lecturing staff at the University of Pretoria supported the movement to ban *War, Wine and Women*, while their Anglophone counterparts rallied to the defence of the book and, after his identity became known, its beleaguered author.

The semi-weekly newspaper *Die Volkstem* of Pretoria took the public lead in the campaign against *War, Wine and Women*. Calling it "'n Walglike Boek" and misquoting its title, the editor of that newspaper sounded what would become a *Leitmotiv* in the debate by averring that the anti-Afrikaner passages in the volume "allesins bereken is om die twee rasse teen mekaar in die harnas te jaag en self 'n gevaar kan oplewer vir die openbare rus en vrede". He further opined that banning books "van hierdie aard" was insufficient; "die outoriteite moet die reg besit om die naam van die outeur op te eis wanneer sulke onbeskofte uitlatings op ons lesende publiek afgelaai word". If rumours that Saint-Mandé held a university post were correct, moreover, he should not be allowed to remain in it after evincing indifference to "die goeie smaak van ons publiek en vir die gevoelens van die grootste deel van die publiek", by which, according to the narrow-gauged vision of the South African ethnic spectrum which prevailed amongst Europeans in the Union of South Africa at that time, he presumably meant the Afrikaans minority in the country. This editor not only endorsed the motion which the *Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie* had passed but encouraged the Minister of the Interior to expose the author and remove him from his professorship.[14]

The manner in which the same motion and the support which *Die Volkstem* lent it was initially reported in the *Pretoria News* foresaged part of the ensuing controversy. That this Anglophone newspaper took a radically different position was only to be expected in light of the fact that former editor Stent, who continued to write for it from time to time, had come under fire and Lamont, whose authorship of *War, Wine and Women* was known to his successor in the editor's office, had contributed articles to that newspaper on several occasions. Mrs Broers's protest against the novel was labelled "a fiery onslaught" in which Stent's comments against the Afrikaners were broached. Much of the editorial in *Die Volkstem* was quoted without comment in an English translation.[15]

Under increasing pressure from the rector of the University of Pretoria, the administrator of the Transvaal, and the Afrikaans press, Lamont published a retraction of the offensive passages without disclosing his identity. He emphasised that the derogatory comments about Afrikaners had come from the mouths of two fictional characters and occupied only an infinitesimal part of his lengthy novel. "Now to say that, in either or both cases, the author is expressing his personal views is the height of absurdity", Lamont insisted. He added that "it would be ridiculous to assume that I have any animosity towards the Afrikaners, many of whom I am proud to number among my friends". Lamont nevertheless acknowledged that "impartial judges" had informed him that the quotations against which objections had been made had given offence and declared: "I

unreservedly withdraw the statements in question, and shall take immediate steps to have them deleted from any future editions that may appear".[16]

Lamont's retraction failed to satisfy his principal opponents, some of whom simply dismissed his explanation and retraction. The editor of *Die Volkstem*, for instance, thought his differentiating of authorial commentary and dialogue unconvincing and did not regard the belated adulation extended to the Voortrekkers as sufficient and repeated his opinion that the true identity of the author should be made known.[17]

The University of Pretoria and the Public Dispute

Arguably more consequential for both Lamont and the University of Pretoria in general was the strife over *War, Wine and Women* which soon erupted on that campus in the wake of the journalistic reactions to the *Vrouefederasie*'s protest. On 7 April students led by members of the *Afrikaanse Studente Bond* submitted to the Executive Committee of the university a strongly worded petition requesting the dismissal of the author of that novel if in fact he was a member of the lecturing staff. The drafters of the statement asserted that *War, Wine and Women* "aanstood gee aan elke Afrikaans-sprekende student" and that its anonymous author was therefore a harmful disgrace to the University of Pretoria, which ostensibly sought to promote mutual respect between Afrikaners and English speakers.[18] A day later, A.E. du Toit and twenty-three of his colleagues at the university, nearly all of whom had Afrikaans surnames, signed a petition in which they did not demand the dismissal of the author (who remained unnamed) but expressed their great indignation at "die growwe laster teen die gedrag van die ouers en voorouers van 'n gedeelte van ons volk" and called upon the Minister of the Interior to take steps to suppress the book.[19] A somewhat larger number of their colleagues, including most of the English speakers but also several Afrikaners, either refused to sign the petition or were not requested to do so. They included *inter alia* Professor J.P.R. Wallis (English) who was then serving as the Dean of the College of Arts, Professor Edgar H. Brookes (Politics), and Professor Leo Fouché (History).[20] Interviewed by the *Pretoria News*, Du Toit explained that he had signed "because I feel that some expression of disappointment and regret should be made to unwarranted statements such as are published in the book referred to". He stated that he did not know the identity of the author of *War, Wine and Women* and refused to comment when asked whether that author's public retraction of his allegedly offensive statements a few days earlier was sufficient.[21]

Some members of the public addressed the issue squarely on the grounds of academic freedom. Writing anonymously in the *Pretoria News*, one disgusted Pretorian who signed his letter "G.J.M." thought Du Toit's personal involvement was a "tragi-comedy" and suggested that if the rector and his fellow "heresy-hunters" had simply ignored *War, Wine and Women* rather than allowing their spite to elope with their discretion, the matter would have died an early death. He added that Du Toit had demonstrated himself unfit for his administrative post at the university and generalised that by signing the petition he had "completely forfeited the confidence of the English-speaking section in Pretoria". G.J.M., who knew that Mrs Broers of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie* was the warden of the Women's Hostel and who had spoken with some of the students who had signed a petition against *War, Wine and Women*, was certain that the matter had arisen within the University of Pretoria and questioned as preposterous Du Toit's assertion that his awareness of the book stemmed from newspapers reviews printed several months previously. He offered his solution for ending the present case and preventing similar ones from arising: "Let the University state, unequivocably [*sic*], that what a man does in his spare time, under his nom de plume, is no business of the institution, provided the institution is not associated with any views expressed by characters in any novel he may write".[22] Another irate reader of the *Pretoria News*, M. Murray, apparently perceived academic freedom quite differently and called on the rector to "curb the mischievous activities of certain professors who are continuously seeking to poison the minds of students in connection with the lamentable controversy that is still dragging itself painfully along". He related that "one member of the staff, obviously referring to the book in question, has just taken great pains, in the course of a lecture, to stress his opinion that the novelist concerned is responsible for all his characters may say". In harmony with the perception of G.J.M., Murray believed that "wire-pulling and lobbying" behind the scenes were bringing the University of Pretoria "into disrepute and justifying the cynics, who have long maintained that too many in this seat of learning are more concerned with politics and racialism than the pursuits for which the University was ostensibly founded".[23]

Before the end of April, seventeen professors and lecturers at the University of Pretoria, the majority of them Anglophone and including such luminaries as Brookes, Wallis, and Fouché, also explicitly addressed the issue of academic freedom in a collective letter to the *Pretoria News*. They carefully dissociated themselves from the "absurdity" of the derogatory statements which fictional characters in *War, Wine and Women*. These learned gentlemen emphasised, however, that a larger issue was at stake:

> But, above all, we value highly the principle of academic freedom which has more than once been accepted and applied by this University, and which, as accepted by all reputable Universities in the modern world, permits any member of a University staff to speak and write freely in his personal capacity without prior censorship or subsequent penalty. We believe that it is in the highest interests of South Africa to maintain this principle. However great the temptation to make exceptions, we feel that sentiment must not override fidelity to principle.[24]

The Dispute Assumes National Proportions

The case immediately became a *cause célèbre* throughout much of South Africa. A broad spectrum of people, chiefly English speakers, outside academe voiced support of the anonymous author. One Jewish observer believed he could empathise with the beleaguered who was the victim of a "heresy hunt". He wondered whether Saint-Mandé's published retraction had failed to satisfy some Afrikaners. "Among enlightened people, of no matter what race or colour, an apology and withdrawal are accepted in a decent, generous spirit", he reminded readers of the *Pretoria News*. This bystander also thought the accusation of extra-mural students at the University of Pretoria that the anti-Afrikaans utterances were included in order to stimulate sales of *War, Wine and Women* was both naïve and preposterous: "A book stands or falls by European and American sales, and oversea hardly a score of people care two hoots whether the Union is mentioned or not".[25]

A few Afrikaners also joined their ranks. Perhaps most notably from the viewpoint of literary history, the well-known physician and author C. Louis Leipoldt of Cape Town took exception to the previously mentioned editorial in *Die Volkstem*. He reminded readers of that newspaper that "daar is baie mense wat oor ons en ons land dink soos die meneer wat in die boek praat" and pointed out that "dit is onmoontlik vir 'n skrywer om sy persone in karakter voor te stel as hy nie hulle taal, hulle opinies en hulle menings noukeurig weergee nie".[26] One self-styled "opregte Afrikaner" who wrote pseudonymously to the *Pretoria News* as "Plaas Boetie" took to task the "narrow-minded, simple souls" who had condemned *War, Wine and Women* apparently without reading it. He attributed their action to provincialism and naïveté and asserted that "the majority of them have never left the shores of this country, have never listened to the views of outsiders: in fact, have never 'mixed'". This writer had heard certain "young bloods"

discuss the possibility of tarring and feathering Saint-Mandé when they could ascertain his identity.[27]

Other South Africans outside the University of Pretoria, chiefly Afrikaners but also English speakers, endorsed the attempt to ferret out Saint-Mandé. The editors of the Afrikaans press spearheaded the effort to keep the issue before the public, focussing on the question of ethnic indignity while rarely if ever broaching that of academic freedom or artistic licence. Some openly added their journalistic voices to the cacophony of demands for his removal if rumours that he was a professor proved true. Many of their readers agreed wholeheartedly. An English-speaking woman from Pretoria, Mrs M. Hudson-Jones, expressed a widely held sentiment in a letter to *Die Volksblad*. "A professor at a University has a lot of influence over young people around him", she asserted with arguably more optimism than some such individuals could muster, "and if he is a man who thinks and writes without restraint, dignity and truth - then he is not fit to hold such a position".[28]

Before the middle of May the increasingly heated matter reached the floor of Parliament. In a session of the House of Assembly, Dr Hjalmar Reitz, who as a seasoned National Party politician had represented Brits since 1924, asked the Minister of the Interior, D.F. Malan, "Of sy aandag gevestig is op die feit dat in 'n sekere boek getietel 'War, Wine and Women' daar die grofste beledigings voorkom teen die Afrikaans-sprekende deel van die bevolking; en (2) of hy die geval sal laat ondersoek". Malan replied that indeed he was aware of the book but informed Reitz that the Union of South Africa did not have particular legislation which allowed him to censor books as a matter of course and that when the public interest required action to be taken against a publication it was a matter with which the police dealt. Unwilling to let the matter stand, and obviously eager to expose Lamont in a public forum, the highly trained jurist Reitz then asked Malan whether "'n sekere prof. Lamont" was employed at the University of Pretoria, what his qualifications for an academic post were, and whether Lamont had published anything of a literary character. Evidently Malan had taken seriously the petition which Du Toit and others at the University of Pretoria had sent him a few weeks earlier. He replied immediately that Lamont was a senior lecturer in French at the University of Pretoria and, in addition to an undergraduate degree from Besançon, held an M.A. with first class honours from the University of Wales. Malan did not consider Lamont's alleged authorship of *War, Wine and Women* at that time but stated that he had contributed literary articles to various journals in South Africa and elsewhere and that when a catalogue of these works had been completed he would send a copy of it to Reitz.[29]

The Kidnapping of Lamont

Before this investigation could be concluded, however, Lamont's identity with "Wilfred Saint-Mandé" became public knowledge. While the young lecturer was riding his bicycle from the University of Pretoria to his house at 745 Arcadia Street on the morning of Monday, 23 May, a pedestrian lunged at him. This action may have been a harbinger of what shortly befell Lamont. At 10h20 a young man who identified himself as a university student approached Lamont at his house and requested him to make a statement in connection with rumours that he was the author of *War, Wine and Women*. The lecturer replied that he would be willing to discuss the matter with the Students' Representative Council and escorted his visitor to the front door. There three other men joined the caller in assaulting him. The assailants dragged their resisting victim into an automobile, kicking him in the head in the process, and drove to the then relatively undeveloped suburb of Sunnyside, where, by Lamont's testimony in the subsequent trial of his assailants, they threatened him with "extreme violence" if he attempted to escape or call for help. Near the edge of the *veld*, the four young men ordered him to walk into an open garage, where they removed his clothing and placed a bathing costume on his otherwise almost naked body. They then coated much of his skin with grease, ripped open a pillow, and spread on him the feathers which it had contained. The muggers completed their attack by placing around Lamont's neck a placard identifying him in both Afrikaans and English as the author of *War, Wine and Women,* depositing him on Church Square in central Pretoria, and informing him that he could retrieve his clothing at Turkstra's tea room. The humiliated lecturer quickly sought refuge in Van Leer's bookshop nearby, where a sympathetic woman came to his assistance by offering to retrieve his personal effects. Another compassionate individual then drove Lamont back to his home in Arcadia Street.[30] Detective Head Constable F.S. Cilliers traced the four assailants to 853 Pretorius Street near the University of Pretoria and directed them to report to the offices of the Criminal Investigation Department. They complied and were readily recognised by their victim in an identification parade. The four, who identified themselves as M. Steyn Vorster, G.W.H. Trichardt, F.C.K. Jacobsz, and S.P.E. Jacobsz, were not arrested, however, but released on their own recognizance until ordered to appear before a magistrate. In the meantime, Dr A.W. Sanders examined Lamont and found that he was suffering from multiple bruises, bronchitis, and shock, had incurred a cut on one hand and was running a fever. There were no serious bodily injuries, however. Sanders issued a medical certificate which released him from his duties at the university for a week. Fearing

that Lamont might develop double pneumonia, he ordered him to enter a nursing home, where he remained for eight days. Thereafter, he heeded medical advice by spending time on the Natal coast.[31]

Other accounts of the incident corroborated much of Lamont's testimony but differed somewhat with regard to certain details. Two of his neighbours, for example, told the *Pretoria News* within hours of the assault that they had heard a "commotion" inside his house "and a cry which sounded as if a child was being hurt". Shortly after noticing this sign of foul play, they had seen two men carrying from the building a third person who was "struggling violently". This reportedly transpired about 10h50. Unidentified men had been seen loitering near Lamont's house since before 7h00.[32]

The attack was of sufficient international interest to be reported the following day in both *The Times* of London and *The New York Times*.[33] Locally, it fanned the smouldering hostility among both Afrikaners and English speakers in Pretoria. On Monday afternoon and evening the police took measures to provide additional security on campus when rumours circulated that some of Lamont's sympathisers were planning to burn down the university, although the local semi-weekly newspaper *Die Volkstem* dismissed that as mere talk.[34] *The Rand Daily Mail*, which from Johannesburg gave the case extensive coverage, reported two days after the assault that while "feeling on the matter is still running high in Pretoria" and was not expected to subside while the administration of the university considered the case, fears by authorities at that institution "that retaliatory measures might be undertaken have now largely subsided", chiefly because "it is being generally realised that public indignation must not be expressed through irresponsible statements and actions".[35] Professor Adriaan J. Barnouw, the previously mentioned Dutch linguist from Columbia University in New York who was then doing research on the state of the Dutch and Afrikaans languages in South Africa, arrived in Pretoria during the last week of May and delivered a guest lecture at the University of Pretoria on 30 May. He reported that "the whole *dorp*, as the Afrikaners still call their capital, was agog with excitement over the lamentable outrage on Mr. Lamont".[36]

The Trial and Conviction of the Assailants

The four assailants were tried in Pretoria before Chief Magistrate A.B. Herold on 7 June. Hjalmar Reitz, who less than a month later had posed questions to D.F. Malan in Parliament

about Lamont and *War, Wine and Women*, represented the Jacobsz brothers and Vorster, while Eugene Marais defended Trichardt in a crowded courtroom. The prosecutor was R.P. Plewman. The defendants all pleaded not guilty to the charge of assault but readily admitted that they had abducted Lamont, coated him with grease and feathers, and dumped him at Church Square. Reitz, who did much of the examining and cross-examining for the defence, admitted that it would have been more appropriate for his clients to have entered a plea of guilty under provocation. Indeed, his defence rested on the contention that the defendants had acted in a normal and understandable manner when the law gave them no reasonable way to respond to libellous statements which had been printed about their ancestors. Reitz asked Lamont directly whether he was the author of *War, Wine and Women*. The violated lecturer objected to this query as irrelevant to the case, but Herold overruled his objection. Lamont conceded that he had written the book. In responding to Reitz's questions about the statements which particularly the character Danesford had made about Afrikaners, Lamont emphasised that they were exaggerations in a fictional dialogue and did not represent his own impressions about the ethnic group in question. Certain colleagues from the University of Pretoria also testified. Wallis and Brookes stressed that they had not known that Lamont had written *War, Wine and Women* until shortly before it was published. Brookes was particularly adamant in stating his objection to members of the university staff "being dragged to Court in this manner".[37]

Herold did not hand down his verdict until 20 June. In the meantime, the exposure of Lamont's authorship fuelled further demands that he be removed from his post. The Intra-Mural Students' Representative Council at the University of Pretoria, for example, called for his dismissal on the grounds that "a person who not only fosters such blasphemous views of the South African nation, but in addition gives publication to them, is enhancing racialism, thereby destroying the very foundation of the University, viz., mutual respect between the various sections".[38]

Given the defendants' admission of abducting and otherwise physically abusing Lamont, Herold's verdict of guilty of common assault was virtually inevitable. He sentenced each of the four to pay a fine of £50 or serve six months' imprisonment with hard labour. In explaining the imposition of the maximum sentence, this magistrate declared that "a more contemptuous disregard of the law of the land, a more deliberate taking into their own hands of the right to punish for a wrong, assuming that the accused were smarting under a sense of wrong, and a more cruel and wanton infliction of illegal punishment on a supposed wrongdoer, it is difficult to conceive. The assault, which is of a gross and aggravated nature, justifies sentence of imprisonment without the option of a fine". Herold nevertheless effectively mitigated the penalty by giving

the option of the £50 fine (at a time when, to illustrate the significance of this sum, most new automobiles cost between £300 and £500) because of the youth of the defendants, the probability that others had either inspired or incited them to attack Lamont, and, revealingly, "the fact that the book did contain insults".[39]

An Afrikaans *Cause Célèbre*

As it happened, the four convicts escaped with impunity. Almost immediately after Herold announced his verdict, Reitz and numerous other supporters in Pretoria and elsewhere in South Africa founded the Pro Patria Fund to defray their fines. It was announced that after the collective fine of £200 had been paid the surplus would be used for the promotion of "Afrikaans interests" at the University of Pretoria, where they had allegedly been neglected. On 25 June the *Pretoria News* could report that no fewer than twenty-six members of the university staff had subscribed.[40] In the Afrikaans stronghold of Potchefstroom, the Nationalist newspaper *Die Weste* launched a Penny Fund to collect money in support of the four convicts who had acted "for the honour of our forefathers".[41]

These efforts themselves became controversial. The disgusted editor of the *Pretoria News* called the professors and lecturers who were supporting the Pro Patria Fund "stupid blunderers" for associating themselves with the act of violence against their colleague.[42] A similarly disillusioned reader, Edward Ingram, proposed tongue-in-cheek that the motto of the university, *Ad Destinatum Persequor*, should be changed to "Rooinek Pasop".[43] Johan Schoeman, a local Afrikaner who had publicly supported the cause of academic freedom and authorial licence in this case, suggested no less satirically that a "Pro-Liberty Fund" should be initiated as a counter-measure and offered to contribute £5 to it. "Surely we of Voortrekker blood are not going to out-cad the cads of all caddom" he asked.[44] Yet many Afrikaners were apparently pleased that the seemingly brazen British lecturer was on the way out. An editor of *Die Burger* in Cape Town probably expressed a widely held attitude about him: "Een ding moet mnr. Lamont en andere van sy soort goed verstaan. Al hoop ons dat hulle voortaan nie aan 'n teer-en-veerdery blootgestel sal word nie, is ons sterk ten gunste daarvan dat aan hul verstand gebring word dat hulle onwelkom is in ons land".[45]

The End of Academic Freedom and the Bilingual Policy

Lamont never returned to his lecturing duties the University of Pretoria. It was reported on 25 July, while he was still on sick leave and away from Pretoria, that someone had sent him an anonymous letter whose text, compiled from words cut out of a newspaper, read as follows: "W.W.W. Death, English swine, it you return to our Afrikaans University or claim damages".[46] The Disciplinary Committee of the University of Pretoria discussed Lamont's case after he admitted in court that he had written *War, Wine and Women*. This body considered what it regarded as "the gross and deliberate libel of the Afrikaner people" in that book, the fact that Lamont's "principal duty at the University is the education of the Afrikaans youth", and what it perceived as Lamont's evasiveness in responding to Du Toit's questions about his authorship a few months earlier. The Disciplinary Committee voted unanimously on 23 July to recommend that Lamont be suspended from his duties immediately and given notice of his dismissal on 1 October, because his continued presence on the staff "is in conflict with the highest and best interests of the University, and must necessarily estrange the Afrikaans-speaking element there". No mention was made of academic freedom. On 2 August the Council of the University of Pretoria discussed Lamont's case, paying particular attention to the report of the Disciplinary Committee. After heated debate, the Council of the University of Pretoria accepted its recommendation on 2 August.[47] By then Lamont had moved to Johannesburg, where his wife, who held a degree in mathematics from the University of Cambridge, taught at the exclusive Roedean School. He informed the *Pretoria News* in August that they intended to leave South Africa but that he hoped to return to academic life at some point.[48] As was widely expected, Minister of the Interior Malan approved the Council's decision early in October, thereby allowing it to become effective.[49]

As a parting shot, at the end of August Lamont brought a civil suit against the Jacobsz brothers and Trichardt and demanded £3 000 in damages from them. Vorster's personal insolvency saved him from being a defendant.[50] The case was heard in another full courtroom in Pretoria on 18 October. Lamont explained that of the amount claimed £44 6s. was for special damages, consisting of £13 13s. for medical attention, £10 13s. to defray nursing home charges, and £20 to cover his recuperative stay on the Natal coast. Certain additional facts came out during this trial. Lamont stated that before the attack 10 000 copies of *War, Wine and Women* had been sold, but he could not specify how many had been sold after it. He had compiled his notes for the book before emigrating to South Africa in 1927 and did not regard its first-person

protagonist as a particularly autobiographical character. Lamont had marked his letter to Du Toit in which he had denied his authorship as "confidential", but the rector had nevertheless shared it with J.S. Smit. Reitz, who again was the counsel for the defence, did not attempt to dispute Lamont's testimony about the assault in what must have seemed an almost impossible case but sought to demonstrate that the plaintiff's perceptions of Afrikaners coincided with those voiced by some of his fictitious characters.[51] Predictably, the verdict was for the plaintiff, although only £750 was awarded. No literary scholar, in announcing the verdict Judge-President de Waal took the liberty of questioning the necessity of a book such as *War, Wine and Women* because Erich Maria Remarque's powerful novel of 1929, *Im Westen nichts Neues*, had supposedly made sufficiently clear the horrors of war.[52] Like the initial attack on Lamont, the verdict in his civil suit was promptly reported in both London and New York.[53]

The public controversy made some impact on the availability of *War, Wine and Women*. In the heavily Afrikaans Orange Free State, for instance, the Department of Education ruled in November 1932 that it "van alle skoolbiblioteke uitgesuit moet word" on the oblique grounds "daar dit vir 'n skoolboekery nie geskik geag word nie".[54]

For the University of Pretoria, the consequences of the Lamont case went far beyond the loss of this intellectually gifted if not particularly popular lecturer. This sordid episode proved to be a pivotal event in the transformation of the university from a bilingual institution into an overwhelmingly Afrikaans-medium one. What in retrospect seems especially ironic in this regard is that as late as October 1931 Du Toit had lauded the "fifty-fifty policy" of dividing most of the instruction into English and Afrikaans (notwithstanding the fact that the latter language was the mother tongue of the vast majority of the students) and insisted that one goal of the university was to become a thoroughly bilingual institution. He had emphasised that this depended in large measure on cultivating mutual respect between Afrikaans and English students.[55] By September 1932, however, it had become evident to the rector that bilingualism at the university had "definitely proved a failure". Du Toit explained in a letter to its Council that in the Lamont controversy "the unfortunate and clearly defined division in the sections, with the attendant extraordinary bitterness of feeling freely expressed on all sides, seems to indicate that the present policy breaks down in a most unexpected matter". He thought that the continuation of the fifty-fifty policy would "inevitably alienate the sympathy and support of the major section which supports the University by way of enrolment of students".[56] The Council responded by voting on 13 September to abolish bilingualism and make Afrikaans the normative medium of instruction while safeguarding in some unspecified way the rights of Anglophone students.[57]

Some of Lamont's colleagues who had supported him during this ordeal left the University of Pretoria not long after his departure. Brookes, for example, who went on to a distinguished career as one of South Africa's luminaries in the fields of political science and for decades encouraged racial reconciliation, resigned under duress in 1933 after Du Toit had repeatedly called him "on the carpet" because of speeches he had delivered and articles he had contributed to newspapers.[58] Professor Leo Fouché, an Afrikaans historian who declined to serve the interests of Afrikaner nationalism, moved to the more hospitable corridors of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1934.[59] By the mid-1930s, the Anglophone ranks of the staff had been decimated, and the University of Pretoria was well on its way to becoming the *volks-universiteit* which many Afrikaners desired.

Conclusion

In retrospect, on the surface the Lamont case can be interpreted as an absurd anomaly in the course of history in which emotions ran far ahead of rationality and allowed the publication of a book to have far greater consequences than would have been the case in an age when ethnic feelings were not running high. Perhaps no-one was more surprised at the magnitude of the influence which *War, Wine and Women* had than Lamont himself. When testifying during the suit he brought against three of his assailants, the erstwhile lecturer declared, "I thought that all people who read books of fiction were sufficiently broad-minded and cultured not to worry about what was said in a book".[60] Lamont thereby was trebly wrong; he overestimated the literary sophistication of many readers, underestimated or ignored the potency of Afrikaner nationalism, and failed to consider how his novel might be exploited for political and ethno-cultural ends by people who apparently cared not a whit about whatever artistic merits his writing might have. As we shall see in Chapters IX and X, Stuart Cloete apparently repeated these mistakes a few years later by publishing deprecating portrayals of fictitious Voortrekkers on the eve of the Great Trek centenary when increasingly nationalistic Afrikaners were proclaiming their unity with these nineteenth-century pioneers.

Notes

1. *Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers Beperk, 1960), pp. 60-65.

2. Dian Joubert (ed.), *Teer-en-Veer in 1932. Rondom die Lamont-saak* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1972).

3. "A War Book", *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 June 1931, p. 508.

4. Max Drennan, "The Great War. 'Rats, Politicians, Lice and Profiteers'", *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg), 5 September 1931, p. 5.

5. "'War, Wine and Women'. Striking Book by a Pretorian", *Pretoria News*, 16 November 1931, p. 5.

6. Transvaal Archives Depot, Unie Onderwys Departement, vol. 16, ref. E3/37/9/2, J.S. Smit (Pretoria), to A.E. du Toit, 14 March 1932.

7. Transvaal Archives Depot, Unie Onderwys Departement, vol. 16, ref. E3/37/9/2, A.E. du Toit (Pretoria) to H.P. Lamont, 14 March 1932.

8. Transvaal Archives Depot, Unie Onderwys Departement, vol. 16, ref. E3/37/9/2, H.P. Lamont (Pretoria) to The Rector, University of Pretoria, 16 March 1932.

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10. Transvaal Archives Depot, Unie Onderwys Departement, vol. 16, ref. E3/37/9/2, H.P. Lamont (Pretoria) to The Rector, Pretoria University, 18 March 1932.

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Chapter VIII

The Rhetoric of Revenge in Lamont's *Halcyon Days in Africa*

While temporarily unemployed and residing first in Johannesburg and subsequently in England following his brusque dismissal from the University of Pretoria in 1932, Lamont devoted part of his time to completing a lengthy fictionalised account of his experiences in the Union of South Africa and certain neighbouring countries. Indicative of his desire to come to grips with the tribulation which had befallen him, he wrote much of this novel before leaving the Transvaal. Interviewed in Durban in early November 1932, Lamont, who announced that he was *en route* to Paris where he intended to pursue linguistic research, stated that he had nearly finished "one lengthy manuscript, which may be said to be the autobiography of a man who comes out to South Africa to teach in a university and the strange events which befall him". The dismissed lecturer also insisted at that time that nothing could alter his "favourable impression of South Africa" but added that to recover from "such a shock as I have experienced following the assault" would take considerable time. Lamont asserted that he had many "Dutch friends" in the Union of South Africa and that he bore no ill will against anyone, including "the young men who assaulted me, for I believe they were misguided and certainly influenced by other people in their action".[1]

Published in London in 1934 as the work once again of "Wilfred Saint-Mandé", *Halcyon Days in Africa* is a rambling, naïve, and partly formless *apologia* replete with palpable errors of fact and gross misrepresentations of Lamont's behaviour. Far from being the work of a forgiving, conciliatory man, much of this narrative is a bitter attack on Afrikanerdom in general, the Dutch Reformed clergy in South Africa, the racism of the National Party, and hypocritical expressions of Christianity. To a great extent Lamont presents a Manichaean typing of Afrikaners and British colonists in South Africa and particularly burdens the former with stereotypical signs of their physical and mental degeneracy, blatant racism, lack of decorum, and general ineptness. Many of the latter equally shallow characters are favourably described, although other British descendants in South Africa also fare poorly under Lamont's acidic pen. As literary art, *Halcyon Days in Africa* has exceedingly little to commend it. Joubert completely neglected this work in his sketchy treatment of the assault on Lamont.[2]

Nevertheless, for at least two reasons this book is valuable for our purposes as a document in South African literary history. First, writing his account gave Lamont an apparently sorely needed opportunity to defend himself after suffering a demeaning physical assault and enduring the loss of his university lectureship. The exercise was evidently one in coping with personal

grief. Lamont thereby provided insight into his perception of recent events at the University of Pretoria during a turbulent period when that young institution was experiencing severe growing pains. He also used the occasion to vent his wrath over what he regarded as an unjust and misdirected political system in South Africa. Secondly, *Halcyon Days in Africa* is virtually from cover to cover Lamont's defence of himself in the humiliating incident, as apparently he did not believe that the interests of justice had been fully served in either the case against his assailants or the management of his own case at the University of Pretoria. Casting aside all subtlety in his narrative, Lamont even goes so far as to reproduce *verbatim* and give a page reference to disparaging comments about many Afrikaners in the Transvaal by the seasoned observer of Afrikanerdom and amateur historian Hans Struben, as will be discussed in this chapter. Why such a defence should have been necessary two years after the fact is not immediately or fully clear. One suspects from reading Lamont's treatment of his autobiographical protagonist's conduct, however, that he was *inter alia* seeking to assuage his own feelings and heal a bruised ego by magnifying in print his generosity to the poor and otherwise less fortunate members of society with whom he comes into contact and his intrepid stance against criminals and other individuals who cross his path.

In our consideration of *Halcyon Days in Africa*, we shall therefore focus primarily on Lamont's mode of argumentation and the case he seeks to develop against both Afrikanerdom and his other perceived foes in general. In addition to this emphasis, however, we shall comment on the author's presentation and defence of himself through his autobiographical protagonist, whose heroic dimensions he expands to incredible dimensions.

Narrative Technique and Plot Summary

Halcyon Days in Africa spans approximately 335 pages and is divided into thirty-four untitled chapters. As a feeble attempt to justify the derogatory comments made in *War, Wine and Women* about Afrikaners in general and their Dutch Reformed clergymen, Lamont also includes a four-page appendix in which he adduces decontextualised excerpts from Cecil Headlam's published edition of the Alfred Milner Papers to demonstrate that earlier observers also wrote negatively about these South Africans. The novel is told from the viewpoint of a conventional omniscient narrator who never loses sight of the protagonist, Alfred de Lisle, a Briton of partly French descent who has fought in the First World War, taken at least one university degree in French and, after

teaching at two schools in Sussex, is called to a professorship in South Africa. The only significant departures from this technique are brief forays into multivocality in the form of epistolary elements and transparently didactic sections in which Lamont provides information about contemporary South Africa by creating dialogues consisting of the newcomer de Lisle's questions and the replies of more experienced residents of the country. The narrative is almost entirely linear and readily followed. Lamont inserts into the text numerous untranslated French words, phrases, and sentences, though far fewer than burden *War, Wine and Women*. The smattering of Afrikaans is partly rendered into English. Generally speaking, the shape of *Halcyon Days in Africa* betrays its author's relative lack of seasoning as a novelist.

The backbone of the plot is de Lisle's encounter with South African society during the latter half of the 1920s and the early 1930s, especially his dissatisfaction with the university at which he lectures, the verbal and physical abuse he suffers at the hands of his adversaries, and his critical observations about the policies of the Hertzog government. Much of this tale is clearly autobiographical, and it contains many elements of a *roman à clef*; several of the characters will be recognisable to readers familiar with the history of the University of Pretoria during the period under consideration. De Lisle, a divorcé who is thirty years old at the beginning of the story, dominates the plot. He has fought in the First World War and been married to a nurse whom he met while convalescing in England in 1917. Their stormy marriage has ended by the time the narrative begins, however, leaving the apparently introverted de Lisle a loner but not necessarily lonely. He may hold a post-graduate degree from some university; in any case, he has done extensive research on Henri Bergson at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. De Lisle speaks French fluently as well as some German and quotes readily and frequently from various works of French literature. His father is deceased; his mother and younger sister, Hilda, reside in Paris. De Lisle's mother might be French; in any case, she is a practising Roman Catholic who confesses regularly and visits the church of Saint Sulpice several times weekly (p. 13). Her only son, however, is an agnostic whose lack of faith causes her anxiety. After teaching at two schools in the fictitious town of Winbridge in Sussex but becoming disillusioned with the personalities and incompetence of his colleagues as well as the dearth of genuine education he believes is being imparted, de Lisle applies for a position at "Krugerburg University College" in South Africa and receives notification of being hired in November of a year given obliquely as "19--". After briefly visiting his mother and sister in Paris, he sails from Southampton to Cape Town on board the *Spion Kop*. Precisely when this supposedly occurs defies explanation. Lamont declares twice in *Halcyon Days in Africa* that de Lisle spends a decade in South Africa (pp. 95, 333), but this does not add up. In what

is undoubtedly intended to be a realistic novel, the overall chronological scheme is bungled in ways which cannot be excused as authorial licence. The *terminus ad quem* cannot be later than 1934. At the time of de Lisle's departure from England, the Pact government, *i.e.* the coalition of the National Party and the Labour Party (beginning in 1924), has been in power for an unspecified length of time (p. 24), but American fellow passengers sing about "Hoover" (presumably President Herbert Hoover), who occupied the White House from 1929 until 1933 (p. 33). The Colour Bar Act, which dates from 1926, is said to have been in effect since the previous year (p. 50). Corroborating the latter bit of evidence, the "damned Flag Bill" is said to be before the House of Assembly (p. 74); the Union Nationality and Flags Act was passed in 1927. While the *Spion Kop* is docking at Cape Town, Lamont refers to one clergyman there as "the Anglican Elmer Gantry", an obvious allusion to the novel of 1927 by Sinclair Lewis (p. 77). Almost immediately after disembarking, de Lisle overhears a barman relating tales of his Rugby exploits in 1924 (p. 81). The newly arrived lecturer then meets by chance an erstwhile British officer whom he knew in Belgium twelve years earlier (p. 91). At the railway station in Johannesburg a few days later, de Lisle sees a man whose physique supposedly would have elicited the envy of Gene Tunney, the world's heavyweight boxing champion from 1926 until 1928 (p. 102). Much of this evidence thus suggests that Lamont had in mind the year 1927, when he assumed his own duties at Transvaal University College, and that his protagonist's stay in South Africa lasted only approximately five years.

Shipboard incidents foreshadow future tribulations in South Africa. Two of de Lisle's cabinmates are rowdy, uncouth Afrikaans racists. Presaging subsequent clashes with many other members of that ethnic group, the emigrating lecturer pummels one of them who has tormented him (pp. 41-42). A Scottish physician named Greig warns him that Krugerburg University College is "a ragtime place" and that in general South African tertiary educational institutions have "no scholarship, no vision, nothing but rabid nationalism in them" (p. 47). In a conversation about contemporary politics, a university lecturer in history named Marks insists that the National Party, "bankrupt in ideas and constructive policy", remains in power only by cultivating racial hatred (p. 51), an astute prophecy of its strategy in the 1929 "Black Peril" election.

De Lisle spends a thoroughly enjoyable week in and near Cape Town before travelling by rail to Krugerburg. The latter city, with a population of "about fifty thousand whites and almost as many natives" (p. 104) is unmistakably Pretoria, whose focal point, Church Square, is here called "Nagmaal Plein" (p. 106). As his first half-day in Krugerburg draws to a close,

de Lisle writes to a friend from that "God-forsaken hole" and, with regard to Afrikaners, predicts that "my sojourn in their midst is likely to be short and unhappy" (p. 106).

At this point Lamont inserts into the narrative a dream de Lisle has on his first night in Krugerburg. Though terse and comprising only a single paragraph, this section is noteworthy in that it anticipates what would become a recurrent apocalyptic theme in South African fiction during the second half of the twentieth century. De Lisle's vision can be quoted *in extenso*: "He dreamt that he was shipwrecked on a desert island where the Dutch, English and natives were all fighting. At first the English seemed to secure an advantage, then the Boers got the upper hand, but finally the blacks, full of fight, despite wounds and poor weapons, overcame the others" (p. 109). This is not merely a prescient vision of the general contours of South African political history during the course of the twentieth century but also a reflection of Lamont's disgust with the politics he had witnessed during his years as a lecturer at the University of Pretoria, as mentioned in Chapter VI.

De Lisle's introduction to Krugerburg University College confirms his suspicions and lends credence to Greig's warnings. As in *War, Wine and Women*, Lamont heaps visual signs of degeneracy on the people and institutions which he is portraying negatively in *Halcyon Days in Africa*. The university is no exception. Architecturally, its cluster of buildings is thoroughly unappealing (p. 109). The sub-dean cautions him against elevated anticipations about the status of French as a subject at the college and the number of students he can expect to teach. This bureaucrat also warns the new lecturer that tensions with Afrikaners can be expected.

The anxious immigrant attempts to teach under these unfavourable conditions, a task exacerbated by the incompetence of most of his few students. De Lisle's relations with his Afrikaans colleagues remained generally strained, although he succeeds in developing friendships with some of the Anglophone members of the staff and with a few other people representing both of these ethnic groups in Krugerburg. His attitude towards Afrikaners in general and especially those at the university is condescending and censorious, and the gap between their Calvinism, which he perceives as dour, and his own agnosticism allows virtually no ground for spiritual fellowship or close friendships. His professional situation never become satisfactory for him, and generally it continues to deteriorate until he eventually chooses to leave South Africa. After de Lisle's first year in Krugerburg, he tends to avoid the university as much as possible and travels fairly extensively in the Union and some of the neighbouring countries. De Lisle also sails back to Europe and Britain at least three times during his overall period of residence in South Africa and finds renewed vitality in his attachment to French culture.

A series of trysts with attractive women whom he invariably impresses add some zest to de Lisle's life. One, a German named Elizabeth Werger, is prepared to enter into a trial marriage with him but returns unexpectedly to Germany, where she discovers that she is pregnant and, succumbing to the ravages of narcotics addition, commits suicide. De Lisle's encounter with Renée Anderson, a Norwegian divorcée whom he meets in Paris, rests on a firmer foundation. The two marry after a year, and she emigrates to South Africa with her daughter. This marriage is harmonious, in contrast to de Lisle's initial one several years earlier in England, and is still intact when the sun sets on *Halcyon Days in Africa*. The overall impression one gains from Lamont's construction of these romantic relationships, however, is that he is playing out his fantasies. Apart from that with Renée Anderson, they are little more than loose ends in the plot.

The episodic structure of the plot, particularly de Lisle's travels in Southern Africa and his encounters with people representing a fairly broad spectrum of ethnic groups and political opinions, allows Lamont to voice his own perceptions of South African politics, prevailing religious beliefs and practices (especially with regard to the Dutch Reformed Church), sexual mores, economic exploitation of the indigenous population, and other matters. De Lisle gradually emerges as a political liberal whose views of race relations in the Union harmonise with those of *inter alia* Lamont and Edgar Brookes, at least as discussed in Chapter VI, as an ideology which was clearly at odds with Afrikaner nationalism. The young lecturer lays out his *Weltanschauung*, meta-ethics, and disregard for conventional religious beliefs in the most explicit terms in Chapter Seventeen in a lengthy conversation with three Scottish South Africans who represent a diversity of political opinion:

> I have no religion in the usually accepted sense of that much-abused term. The various sects fill me with pity and contempt, when they don't inspire amusement. I am a determinist and regard thought as purely a mechanical process, due to causes over which we have no control. There is what I consider as a life-force, of which we are tiny grains, like specks of sand on a shore of infinite dimensions. The present anarchy in sex matters is due to the abandonment of the religious ideas on which the western philosophy of sex was based. Unable to rejuvenate the happy, free, spontaneous paganism of the Greeks, we spend our time in dismal, monotonous, callous fornications, as joylessly and grimly as prisoners on a treadmill. To me the terms "good" and "evil" mean nothing at all. Neither am I aware of a conscience. You can't divide men into good and bad, but into wise

> and foolish. It is only by putting off holiness and putting on intellect that we can save our souls alive. Western civilization (so-called) is going rotten, like an over-ripe fruit. The regret of my life is that I wasn't born on the shores of the Gulf of Corinth about two thousand seven hundred years ago .... I am an honest pagan, lusting for all sensual pleasures, which to me are innocent and wholly delightful (p. 191).

Also embedded in the text as de Lisle tours the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia, Basutoland, and Portuguese East Africa are disjointed descriptive sections which read like excerpts from travelogues. They shed light on various topograpical and ethnographic matters but detract from the treatment of the central character and his relationship to South African institutions which - notwithstanding the title of this novel - are focussed primarily in and near Pretoria.

The plot reaches its culmination in Lamont's allegorical construction of the assault he suffered in 1932 following the publication of *War, Wine and Women*. This will be discussed in greater detail below. Following a physical attack on de Lisle, who has painted a picture which many Afrikaners find offensive, he leaves South Africa under great duress and returns to southern England with his wife and step-daughter. There he professes his aversion to urban life and to both British and South African chauvinism.

Self-aggrandizement

The battered and humiliated erstwhile lecturer cannot resist the temptation to elevate his autobiographical protagonist to a heroic level whose masculinity has been restored with a vengeance. Indeed, it is not too much to judge that the entire text of *Halcyon Days in Africa* is an exercise in the exaggerated restoration of self-esteem. In several places, however, Lamont goes to great lengths to underscore de Lisle's generosity, strength, and concern for social justice. We shall briefly examine a representative cross-section of these instances.

Before sailing away from England, de Lisle displays his largesse and moral astuteness, not least in his encounters with prostitutes, practitioners of a profession which also occupies a prominent place in *War, Wine and Women*. On a day trip to London, the young teacher is accosted by a colleen from County Cork who suggests that they repair to a nearby hotel but, instead of availing himself of her body, he takes pity on her and loans her money which, he believes, will allow her to return to her parents' home in Ireland. De Lisle learns the following day that his

altruistic generosity has been exploited; he reads in a newspaper that this Maureen has been arrested for committing unspecified crimes (pp. 13-17).

This disillusioning experience does not prevent de Lisle from again attempting to assist the economically dispossessed. After reaching Cape Town, he meets a stoker named Jackson whose acquaintance he has initially made in the engine-room of the *Spion Kop*. Down on his luck and a fugitive from justice, this compatriot receives assistance from de Lisle in the form of a disguise, temporary accommodation, and a loan (pp. 78-79, 82-84). In this instance, however, generosity is rewarded; Jackson eventually repays the money he has borrowed. Before the end of his week in Cape Town, de Lisle, apparently showing the magnanimity to transcend the disillusionment of being swindled by the Irish girl in London, assists a neophyte prostitute who loathes her profession and accepts £5 from him on the condition that she never again sell her body. She, too, repays the loan (pp. 87-88).

Long before recouping the money he has lent to Jackson, de Lisle arrives in Krugerburg and demonstrates his compassion before leaving the railway station. Lamont includes a racial dimension in this episode with another in his series of negative portrayals of an Afrikaner. Through a window of the train, de Lisle presents his old suit, which is of "excellent material and still had much wear in it", to an Afrikaans labourer who, instead of expressing gratitude, merely asks in a surly voice, "Is dit alles?" De Lisle thereupon seizes the parcel from his hands and gives it instead to a shabbily attired black man, who responds with a logorrhea of thanks. As the newly arrived Englishman walks away from the train, he notices the envious Afrikaner struggling with the recipient for control of the suit and disgustedly reacts by pushing the Afrikaner aside (p. 104).

De Lisle also evinces his heroic masculinity in his power over the animal kingdom. The first major episode in which Lamont describes this superiority over nature occurs in Chapter Seventeen, in which de Lisle is a guest at the farm of a well-to-do acquaintance, a banker named Van Osse. The discontented lecturer is bitten on the hand by a snake, but he also shoots several snakes with a rifle (p. 189). These incidents pale, however, in comparison with de Lisle's rugged valour while on a journey to Nyasaland (subsequently Malaŵi). Sleeping in a primitive building one night, he awakens and discovers to his horror a large, venomous cobra lying on him. Fearing virtually instant death if he in any way provokes this reptile without having control of it, he succeeds in grasping it after a fluttering bird causes a distraction. Lamont's description of the ensuing struggle may illustrate his vision of how he wishes to strike back at his tormenters:

> Alfred clutched at his enemy just behind the head. Then commenced a terrible struggle that must have lasted for nearly an hour. Like a great whiplash the cobra slashed its body about, hissing dreadfully and dripping venom. If Alfred's hands had not been unusually strong he could never have retained his hold. In a grip of steel he held that writhing reptile as they both rolled about the earthen floor. After the struggle had continued for some time a pole collapsed and the roof came crashing down. Blinded and choked by dust, stung by countless insects, the frenzied man hung on, realising full well that to relax his hold meant instant death. . . . At last he got both feet on its neck, picked up a large stone and battered the abominable head until only a bloody shapeless mass remained (p. 287).

On the same stay in Nyasaland, de Lisle saves a village from further devastation after marauding lions kill some of its inhabitants and their livestock. How he comes into contact with the village is unclear from the text. In any case, de Lisle uses his ingenuity on two nights to lure lions into a clearing where he shoots them with a .45 calibre sidearm. He performs this feat "with a coolness and deliberation that surprised him afterwards". The grateful villagers respond to his exploits with great joy (p. 285).

As we shall see, the de Lisle of *Halcyon Days in Africa* affords much more resistance when assailants ambush him at his house than the Lamont of history did. Elsewhere in the novel, the protagonist continues the record of success with his fists that he established on board the *Spion Kop*. He emerges victorious from an altercation in Durban. In the final chapter of *Halcyon Days in Africa*, de Lisle again uses his fists to establish his position and silence an English public school product who has been a colonial farmer in Kenya. The incident occurs as de Lisle and his wife sail up the east coast of Africa *en route* to the Mediterranean and England. His victim, who bears the surname "Woodtub" but whom the stewards call "fat-a**e", irritates de Lisle with his singing. When the two men argue about the matter, de Lisle refuses to apologise for insisting that Woodtub cease and desist and challenges him to settle the matter on the deck. "Next morning Woodtub received such a drubbing that he remained in his cabin for a week", narrates Lamont with obvious satisfaction (p. 325). De Lisle's overall encounter with Africa, notwithstanding Lamont's battering there, is thus bracketed by nearly symmetrical pugilistic victories that underscore his masculinity and unvanquished spirit.

Getting Revenge: Afrikaners and Afrikanerdom

Much of what Lamont writes in *Halcyon Days in Africa* can be read as a protracted effort to vindicate statements he made about the Voortrekkers, contemporary rural Afrikaners, and the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church in *War, Wine and Women*. Other sections of the text are no less patently part of his defence of himself in the wake of the controversy surrounding his authorship and the assault on him in 1932. We shall examine how Lamont exploits his novel to serve those ends, especially by using it as a verbal weapon against individual and groups of Afrikaners as well as Afrikaans institutions. This occurs chiefly in direct confrontations between de Lisle and the people in question or when he receives information from other Britons whose experience in South Africa is lengthier than his own and who thus are presented as authorities on its ethnic groups.

Impoverished rural Afrikaners again fare very poorly under Lamont's pen. (He does not pay significant attention to the urban "poor whites" whose ranks had swelled early in the twentieth century and who were often the objects of derision by their English-speaking compatriots.) It will be recalled that in *War, Wine and Women* they are called a filthy lot who use their homes as latrines and never bathe. One of de Lisle's first informants about the subject is the matron, Miss Maple, at the leprosy hospital which he visits near Krugerburg at the invitation of the Swiss missionary, Vinet, whose two daughters are his only worthy students at the university. Lamont first establishes her credibility. She is "a dignified woman of about fifty" whose "face denoted a refined nature and considerable strength of character". Maple informs de Lisle that she had been there for twenty years. When he asks her about the ætiology of leprosy, she replies that a lack of hygiene bears much of the responsibility and that nearly all the newly arrived patients "come here in a most filthy condition" regardless of their race. Maple then levels her verbal gun at rural Afrikaners: "Many backveld hovels smell worse than pig-sties. The poor whites hardly ever bath, probably because water is so scarce. Most of them have such grimy hides that even after repeated scrubbings, the dark colour, due entirely to dirt, remains. Their sense of smell must be pretty blunt also, for they lie on beds that would disgust a Breton peasant" (pp. 139-141). De Lisle's own observations corroborate this stark assessment when he and Van Osse drive to the latter's farm in the northern Transvaal and approach the building in which an Afrikaans tenant family resides. "Alfred was amazed at the filth lying about the house. Fowls, pigs and goats were foraging among the litter lying near the entrance to the hovel", relates Lamont. The

human inhabitants are hardly more hygienic, and one of them is burdened by physical signs that testify not only to slovenliness but also immorality: "The head of the settlement was short, thick-set, inclined to corpulence, and red of face. His little eyes, sunk in fat, and the thick lips, denoted a cruel, cunning, coarse, sensual nature. His khaki shirt looked as if it hadn't been washed for a month. . . . Greasy, shapeless trousers and rough shoes completed the picture of a rascal who, even while endeavouring to be polite, could not entirely conceal his inherent duplicity" (p. 184). After leaving the scene, de Lisle informs his host that "the stink and filth" nearly caused him to vomit (p. 186).

In a later section of *Halcyon Days in Africa*, Lamont attempts to justify what he has written both in this book and earlier in *War, Wine and Women* about the lack of hygiene amongst rural Afrikaners. In a conversation with an acquaintance who questions the validity of these statements, de Lisle opens *Recollections of Adventures* by the veteran Transvaler H.W. Struben.[3] On page 96 he finds this corroborative statement:

> To-day it is to me a sad sight to see the descendants of families, whom I knew some years ago in comfortable circumstances, now living in degrading poverty, and deteriorating physically and morally, without energy for the work of the day or hope for the future . . . if the landless people of white descent do not become industrious, the natives will take their place and they will die out (pp. 261-262).

Professional and cultural groupings within Afrikanerdom also draw Lamont's fire. He seeks to prove the unsubstantiated assertions which Danesford and Walters made about the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church, especially in villages, by having de Lisle observe them at first hand. Physical signs again carry much of the burden of persuasion. *En route* to Krugerburg after his initial week in Cape Town, for instance, the young lecturer notices on the platform of a station in the Karoo "two tall predikants, with black suits and little white ties, [who] stood drinking coffee near the buffet". There is nothing appealing about these ecclesiastical gentlemen. On the contrary, "they had the forbidding mien of men whose duty is mainly to coerce the community, by fear of hell or social ostracism, to conform–at least outwardly–to their dismal Calvinism" (p. 95). On his first day at Krugerburg University College, de Lisle converses candidly with an unspecified "English colleague" who cautions him that he will have to "pander to the mediæval mind of the Dutch Reformed Church and the imbecility of the mob. . . . Our spiritual guides have left the Christ out of Christianity". In response to de Lisle's query whether these clergymen are "really

such stinkers", he allows that "there are some decent ones, but damn few" and explains that "the trouble with them is that they're so horribly pugnacious. The old-time saints spent their time in sackcloth and ashes, scourged the body and humiliated themselves before God. The modern specimen is a jailer, and [*sic*] inquisitor, a statistician, an enquiry-agent, a domineering Dogberry bent on making things unpleasant for all who refuse to bow the neck under their yoke" (p. 120). Clerical power has also invaded the university. The following day de Lisle hears from a colleague named Glanvill, a palæontologist who claims that the appointment of his head of department, "who knows as much palæontology as my bottom", was influenced by the clergy in the interests of preventing heretical thoughts from being uttered in the lecture theatre (p. 122). The patently embittered Glanvill expands his criticism to encompass the Dutch Reformed ministerium in general, lambasting its members as social parasites with warped personalities: "A predikant gets £600 per annum on an average, a free house, numerous perquisites and unlimited prestige. A more worldly, calculating, unspiritual, nasty set it would be hard to find" (p. 122). In this case, however, Lamont undermines the plausibility of Lamont's informant by typical overkill; Glanvill continues his tirade against individual clergymen with derogatory remarks which do little more than underscore his own bitterness.

The organisation which triggered the witch hunt against Lamont in 1932, the *Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie*, is in *Halcyon Days in Africa* called the "Vroue Beskawing Vereniging". In his first reference to it, he establishes its distance from the liberal ideal of academic freedom by declaring through one of de Lisle's colleagues, a "big-hearted and companionable individual" named Haldane who enlightens him about the machinations of the university, that this organisation has just passed a resolution demanding the dismissal of Professor Draper, a social reformer who is unquestionably a fictional representation of Professor Edgar Brookes. Lamont's retrospective rage shines through his fiery denunciation of this women's association, voiced by Haldane, who identifies it as "a society consisting largely of bigoted, blowzy females, fat and ignorant, with minds like sewers, who meet together regularly to tell the world how mediæval is their outlook". The *Vereniging* is, moreover, racist. "Their favourite topic is the native question, on which they solemnly air their ignorance", fumes Haldane. "It's a screaming farce, really. Just imagine these hulking, shapeless, flat-footed, cow-faced, female morons prating about protecting white civilization! Their view is that anyone who asks us to treat the native as a human being is a traitor, to be imprisoned or deported forthwith. Their benighted minds harbour nothing but fear, hatred and resentment" (p. 125). We shall return briefly to Lamont's treatment of the *Vroue Beskawing Vereniging* in the section titled "Reconstructing the Assault".

Lamont could hardly have forgotten the pivotal and persistent rôle which the Afrikaans press played in the destruction of his lecturing career, and given his disinclination to forgive it is not surprising that he chose to strike back at it in *Halcyon Days in Africa*. This is voiced through Doctor Greig, the medical practitioner whom de Lisle has met on board the *Spion Kop*. The two men meet at Turkstra's, the well-known café in Pretoria. (Curiously enough, even though a wealth of evidence suggests that Krugerburg is essentially that city, Pretoria appears briefly as a separate venue in *Halcyon Days in Africa*.) Greig points out a journalist among the other guests and suggests that the press in the Transvaal needs more men like him. His indictment of this branch of provincial journalism is severe and unsubstantiated as he merely avers that "on the whole the Afrikaner papers are nothing but gutter-rags, directed by fanatics whose untalented pens drip gall and wormwood". Lamont's self-righteous allusion to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ will not be lost on anyone with even a modest acquaintance with the New Testament. Greig refers in the same breath to popular "journalistic prostitutes who snivel and snarl to order" but again fails to adduce any illustrative or other evidence to prove his assertion (p. 219). The venue of their conversation may itself be significant as part of Lamont's revenge; it was that café to which he had to flee after being tarred and feathered and deposited in a semi-nude state on Church Square in 1932. Now the character who represents him in *Halcyon Days in Africa* is clothed in self-righteousness and verbally allied with a seasoned veteran of South Africa who does not hesitate to hurl about all manner of acerbic rhetoric when describing Afrikaners, especially when the latter are not within earshot to defend themselves.

Gunning at the Bastion of the University

The extant evidence of Lamont's years as the lecturer in French at the University of Pretoria does not suffice to draw any firm conclusions about his attitudes towards that institution at that time; in fact, it is virtually nil. One can only speculate on the basis of such evidence as his antagonistic comments about Afrikaners in *War, Wine and Women* and his friendship with Edgar Brookes that he probably had little respect for the university where he was employed. Be that as it may, Lamont's dismissal in the wake of his exposure as the author of that novel left an exceedingly bitter taste in his mouth, one which he spits out in *Halcyon Days in Africa*. The result is a thoroughly unsavoury portrayal of the university as an intellectually and politically debased institution. In *Halcyon Days in Africa* he lambasts it from top to bottom, taking to task the administra-

tion, the student body, Afrikaans colleagues, and even the physical features of the campus. As is so often the case in Lamont's fiction, he undermines his credibility as a witness by engaging in unbridled hyperbole.

De Lisle's introduction to Krugerburg University College confirms his suspicions about its institutional character and lends credence to Greig's shipboard warnings. As in *War, Wine and Women*, Lamont heaps visual signs of degeneracy on people and institutions which he is portraying negatively in *Halcyon Days in Africa*. The university is no exception. Its cluster of "squat and ugly" buildings has grown unsystematically (p. 109). The disharmony of the "higgledy-piggledy" architecture prefigures the clashes of personalities already within the walls and de Lisle's own participation in the strife. The sub-dean D'Aubigne, who is the first member of the administration whom he encounters in these unappealing surroundings, warns him that "French is the *bête noire* here" and that few students do that subject. D'Aubigne, whose surname suggests Cape Huguenot origins, also cautions that tensions with Afrikaners can be expected: "His religious convictions are waning, so he transfers all his rancorous fanaticism from the pew to the political rostrum.... Politics vitiate everything in this country" (p. 110). A few days later another member of the staff confides to de Lisle that many of their colleagues have been political appointees and that the institution is "simply a political hotbed masquerading as a university" (pp. 117-118). The head of the college, identified only as Edelman, immediately seeks to impose restrictions on de Lisle's academic freedom by insisting that since "many of the French classics are offensive" they must either be omitted from the syllabus or presented only in "expurgated editions" (p. 119).

The new lecturer attempts to teach under these unfavourable conditions, a task exacerbated by the incompetence of most of his few students. Lamont catalogues this in two places. In Chapter Twelve, de Lisle concludes by the end of his first week at his post that he has "two dozen students, of whom two, daughters of a Swiss missionary, were excellent, three were fair, and the remainder atrocious" (p. 125). In the following chapter, Lamont extends his indictment to cover most of the student body. "Not ten per cent of the students were fit for higher academic education, but all had to pass, as fees were precious", he explains. "Woeful was the fate of a professor who attempted to keep up a reasonable standard. In a short time he was lecturing to an empty room". De Lisle is not exempt. Before arriving in Krugerburg, "he had visions of intellectual discussions on literary topics, and had even dreams of starting a University French debating society". Disillusionment sets in almost immediately: "Very few of his students could either read, write, or understand spoken French with any degree of accuracy". They are not only intellectually deficient but also emotionally immature. Lamont unleashes some of his most caustic rhetoric

at them: "When lectured to in French they looked blank, tittered, and behaved like immature, uncultured fools–which of course they were. The simplest words had to be explained. Lacking all cultural background, the noodles were about as ripe to understand French literature and civilization as a sea-horse to appreciate Beethoven" (p. 143).

Reconstructing the Assault

Nowhere does Lamont's need to reconfigure history to assuage his battered ego become more apparent than in his account of the assault on de Lisle, which is clearly a fictional analogy of the episode in which he was tarred and feathered in 1932. That earlier incident is recounted briefly in Chapter Twenty-four by one of de Lisle's friends named Conway who in a conversation asks him whether he has heard about an "unfortunate novelist" who has recently been "brutally assaulted". Conway does not state any details of the crime but explains how the *littérateur* in question antagonised one segment of the South African population. This echoes faithfully what had prompted the reaction against *War, Wine and Women*:

> He was rash enough to allow a couple of characters to utter sentiments displeasing to our Afrikaner lords.... It was solemnly declared, by so-called educated people, that a novelist is responsible for the strict accuracy of every statement in his book, that he, *ipso facto*, shares the views expresssed [*sic*] by all his characters, that if any of his puppets offends the susceptibilities of the herd he must be assailed with extreme brutality to teach him the error of his ways (pp. 249-250).

De Lisle does not write a novel, but while on an idyllic vacation with Renée on the Natal South Coast he paints a picture titled "Honi Soit Qui Mal y Pense" which is subsequently displayed in an exhibition under a *nom de guerre*. The title appears to have been inspired by the identical motto of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, meaning "Shame to him who thinks evil of it" or, more popularly, "Evil to him who evil thinks". Three of the minor characters in the painting, "so small as to need a magnifying glass to see them", correspond to the Afrikaners who were lambasted in *War, Wine and Women*, namely a Dutch Reformed clergyman, a Voortrekker, and a Poor White. Some viewers are scandalised, although precisely why they find de Lisle's art offensive Lamont does not state. Instead, he belittles criticism by declaring that "those who knew

least about art were loudest in their denunciation of the picture" (p. 256). When asked by a colleague at the university why he has included these members of the "Afrikaner clan" in the painting and made them look like "churlish rogues", de Lisle replies bitterly, "I wanted to see if it's [*sic*] members are the humourless jobbernowls they are often supposed to be, or whether they have sufficient poise, civilization and self-confidence to stand adverse criticism". He concludes that the former assumption remains true (p. 257). After de Lisle returns from a trip to Europe, he resumes his duties at the university and discovers that "the rabid racialists" glare at him "in a most savage manner" when he enters its gates. He regrets not staying abroad (p. 271).

The campaign against de Lisle is waged on several fronts. He receives letters in which he is threatened with assassination. More specifically, the *Vroue Beskawing Verening*, at its meeting in a place which Lamont vengefully calls "Hoerkraal" in the northern Transvaal, passes resolutions calling for de Lisle's dismissal from the university and deportation from the Union of South Africa. (It will be recalled that in Lamont's case, the *Vrouefederasie* met at Pietersburg and demanded the banning of *War, Wine and Women)*. Their initial efforts evolve into a conspiracy involving other corners of Afrikanerdom throughout much of the country, especially in rural areas. This "foul plot hatched by professors, politicians and predikants" involves *inter alia* sending circulars "to all the backveld dorps, inviting attacks against the picture and artist", gossip by "wives of all the poisonous racialists on the [university] staff", and petitions signed by "axe-grinders, fanatics and the rabble, calling upon the Minister to take drastic action". At Krugerburg University College, de Lisle enjoys only limited support. Speakers at a convocation of the Senate solemnly affirm that "no artist has a right to depict anything distasteful to the Afrikaner nation", and de Lisle's colleagues are requested to sign a petition denouncing him as the suspected creator of "Honi Soit Qui Mal y Pense". Students at the same institution arrange "fierce meetings" to discuss the case; some of them utter "bloodcurdling threats against Professor de Lisle". The intimidating atmosphere which these protests generate prompts him to carry a revolver and believe that an attack on his person is imminent (pp. 271-273).

The assault on de Lisle occurs in Chapter Thirty and bears some resemblance to that on Lamont but also differs from it in fundamental respects. A "young brute" accosts de Lisle at his flat late one morning and is cordially invited into the study. The guest, who identifies himself as a student at the university, informs him that the student body is divided into two "bitterly hostile camps" over de Lisle's alleged responsibility for the infamous painting and insists that he profess openly whether he painted it. The lecturer vacillates but agrees to meet members of the Students' Representative Council who are waiting outdoors. Upon leaving the security

of his home, however, de Lisle is struck on the head and notices "four desperadoes" who have been lurking in the shrubbery. His well-rehearsed fists briefly serve him well in his defence: "Three of the assailants were knocked flat with fierce punches on their ugly faces, but gradually weight of numbers told". In contrast to his kicking attackers, de Lisle conducts "a clean fight" for, amazingly enough, no less than fifteen minutes before "the murderous bullies knocked him senseless". They then flee. Unlike Lamont, de Lisle is neither kidnapped nor tarred and feathered. He is not deposited in a semi-nude state on Church Square. Like Lamont, however, he receives from a physician a certificate ordering him to take medical leave from his university post and enter a nursing home for a period of convalescence (pp. 274-275).

The disposition of the case is described with an appreciable measure of fidelity to the aftermath of the assault on Lamont. Journalistic coverage of the assault varies greatly. Prominent South African English daily newspapers condemn the "cowardly outrage" against de Lisle "in the strongest terms". Meanwhile, "the Afrikaans press reported the matter in a non-committal fashion, although a few of the filthy rags, unable to restrain their jubilation, gloated openly" (p. 276). Lamont's memory served him well in this regard. Moreover, the trial of de Lisle's assailants bears much resemblance to that of the four young Afrikaners who kidnapped Lamont, although the embittered retrospective author heightens the courtroom suspense moderately and, true to form, excoriates the "Afrikaner riffraff" who attend the proceedings in an effort "to catch a glimpse of the hated enemy, for whose blood they thirsted". Outside the building, "a mob in the yard yelled vile insults in Afrikaans" in a scene which reminds de Lisle of the Reign of Terror following the French Revolution. Lamont reproduces few details of the trial but makes clear his respect for the presiding magistrate. The physical signs of this jurist make clear his integrity: "A striking-looking man of about sixty, with a rugged, honest, open face, on which even a casual observer could read character and strength of will, he immediately ordered the expulsion of a chattering group near the main door. It was obvious that he would stand no nonsense". When he reads his verdict of guilty the following day, the magistrate condemns the crime "in the strongest terms" and tells the defendants that he regards their testimony, which is not quoted in *Halcyon Days in Africa*, as false. Rather than sentencing them to prison, however, the magistrate elects to impose the maximum fine on the grounds that the defendants are merely "cats' paws". Like Lamont's assailants, in effect they escape with impunity and are hailed in Afrikaans circles. The Afrikaans press initiates a campaign to defray their fines, and, in an unveiled dig at *Die Burger*, Lamont describes how "*Die Skobbejak*, a foul Cape rag, lived up to its reputation for virulence" by proposing that a medal be struck in their honour (p. 277).

One of the most significant deviations from Lamont's own case in this fictional representation concerns his departure from the university. The administration of that institution does not have an opportunity to fire the French lecturer, who announces to his friend Conway that he is leaving of his own volition. "I always loathed the place, but after what has happened it is impossible for me to enter that building again", he explains. Conway replies that if he could sell his house and recover his investment of some shares whose value is depressed, he would follow suit (p. 278). De Lisle's decision is an inversion of the power which the University of Pretoria exercised over Lamont, one in which the dismissed erstwhile lecturer apparently sought to find some measure of emotional gratification by rewriting history.

Conclusion

As indicated in the first paragraph of this chapter, *Halcyon Days in Africa* has very little to commend it as a work of fictional art. The narrative is partially formless and rambling. Apart from de Lisle, the development of the characters is weak; indeed, most of them, especially the Afrikaners, do not rise above the level of crass stereotypes. Lamont casts his memories in a quasi-Manichæan scheme in which with few exceptions the Afrikaans characters are physically degenerate, narrow-minded, chauvinistic, professionally incompetent, authoritarian, violent, grimy, and otherwise offensive. Meanwhile, the Anglophone players in this work generally fare much better under Lamont's pen, although he does not hesitate to rake some of them over the coals, as well. Virtually all the sympathetically portrayed characters, with the exception of de Lisle's female companions, are British in origin. The massive amount of unrestrained negative description which Lamont heaps on those characters who represent his foes in South Africa severely undermines his credibility and makes it difficult to take seriously his witness about the responsibility for the woes he suffered during his years as a university lecturer. In the final analysis, the principal value of *Halcyon Days in Africa* lies in its revelation of the bitterness and censoriousness of Lamont's mind after he was hounded out of the University of Pretoria and the Union of South Africa for challenging the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers. Nevertheless, taken *cum grano salis* this parting shot at Afrikanerdom testifies to the degree of tension which could arise between defensive guardians of the Voortrekker legacy and a would-be *littérateur* who had the temerity to challenge the heroic myth and thus confirms a central point stated in Chapter I of the present study. With regard to Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* and Cloete's *Turning Wheels*, it was stated there that

"the discussion of certain thinly veiled elements in these two texts, read against the backdrop of the analysis of the South African historical matrix of the 1930s, will reveal that in their portrayal of ethnic groups these two authors were decidedly influenced by contemporary attitudes and political issues". As we have seen in Chapter VI, this was clearly the case in *War, Wine and Women*; the present chapter amply demonstrates the point that also after his return to the United Kingdom Lamont's writing about Afrikaners vividly reflected derogatory and condescending attitudes and incorporated references to issues of the day. Now, however, his individual and group portrayals were all the more bitter because of the physical abuse and unjust administrative treatment he had received in Pretoria. His fate was a warning which Stuart Cloete apparently failed to heed and perhaps never heard.

Notes

1. "Two More Novels. Prof. Lamont to go to Paris", *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg), 3 November 1932, p. 10.

2. Dian Joubert (ed.), *Teer-en-Veer in 1932. Rondom die Lamont-saak* (Cape Town: Tafelberg: 1972).

3. H.W. Struben, *Recollections of Adventures. Pioneering and Development in South Africa 1850-1911* (Cape Town: T. Maskew Miller, 1920).

Chapter IX

Stuart Cloete's Portrayal of the Voortrekkers in *Turning Wheels*

The controversy over *War, Wine and Women* set the stage for Afrikaner nationalists' reactions to Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels* when the latter novel was published in 1937, although neither Lamont's book nor the persecution of that neophyte author appears to have influenced Cloete in any way. As we shall see in Chapter X, critical reactions to *Turning Wheels* have varied enormously since its publication. In 1937 many reviewers in United Kingdom and United States of America showered accolades on Cloete's first published novel, lauding it as an engaging, panoramic story in which he reproduced grippingly the powerful landscape through which the Voortrekkers migrated, captured what they believed was the spirit of Africa, and brought readers into the minds of his characters. In the Union of South Africa, Anglophone critics tended to be more circumspect in their praise but nevertheless evinced considerable enthusiasm for *Turning Wheels*. Most Afrikaans commentators took umbrage, however, and vilified Cloete's work as ethnic calumny. Relatively little notice was given *Turning Wheels* for another half-century, although, as indicated in Chapter I, there are brief references to it in various histories of South African literature. In 1996, Edwin Hees dismissed *Turning Wheels* as "in effect a soap opera" but did not specify his grounds for that appellation.[1]

In the present chapter we shall first present a biographical sketch of Stuart Cloete, paying special attention to facts in his life prior to the mid-1930s which may have had a particular bearing on his perception of nineteenth-century South African history, particularly the Great Trek, and his characterisation of the Voortrekkers, briefly describe the plot and text of *Turning Wheels*, and comment at length on how Cloete developed a surprisingly broad spectrum of both original and stereotypical characters in his recreation of part of the Great Trek, some of whom challenged the firmly entrenched heroic image of the emigrating Boers, the origin and development of which we traced in Chapter II. A secondary consideration will be how parts of this novel can also be read as a critical observer's commentary on aspects of race relations in troubled South African society between the two world wars (such as anti-Semitism and the legislation which the Hertzog government enacted to protect white labour) to which reference was made in Chapter V and a thinly veiled warning to the country's white population to take seriously the discontent of its economically dispossessed residents.

A Biographical Sketch of Stuart Cloete

Part of the protest against Cloete and *Turning Wheels* centred on what some critics believed was an insincere claim on his part that he was at least partly Afrikaans. This profession of ethnic identity was repeatedly challenged in the Afrikaans press, and his detractors tended to regard him as essentially an Englishman who had merely spent enough time in the Union of South Africa to gain some knowledge of its topography and a woefully lacking grasp of the Afrikaans language. More favourably disposed reviewers, as we shall see in the following chapter, could praise his ability to depict the Great Trek and Afrikaners in general with the acumen that only an insider could possess. An informed analysis of these conflicting claims necessitates at least a rudimentary knowledge of Cloete's parentage, upbringing, education, and professional activity prior to his attempt to write about the minds of Voortrekkers who had lived a century before he took up the novelist's pen.

The paternal root of Cloete's family tree lies deep in the history of European settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. When Jan van Riebeeck disembarked at Table Bay in 1652 to establish a station for the Dutch East India Company, he was accompanied by a German colleague, Jacob Cloete (whose surname also appears as Cloeten and Kloeten in early sources) from the city of Köln, or Cologne, on the Rhine. The wife of this Rhenish settler had died and been buried at sea *en route* to the Cape, but their four children had survived the journey. The Cloetes soon demonstrated their agricultural skills and became prominent farmers near Cape Town. The dynasty they founded prospered, and by the end of the eighteenth century its members controlled the Groot Constantia estate and many other properties in the region.[2]

Stuart Cloete's father, Laurence Woodbine Cloete, was a native Capetonian *bon vivant* who had got into financial and legal difficulties in connection with the Witwatersrand gold rush of the 1880s and returned to London, where he had briefly lived earlier, with his Scottish wife, Edith Margaret Park.[3] Apparently in an effort to put his chequered past behind him, this Cloete had adopted the surname Graham. He became a company promoter in association with a British banking concern, a position which allowed him to spend a great deal of time in continental Europe. It was in Paris that their youngest child, Edward Fairley Stuart Graham, was born on 23 July 1897. Stuart received his primary education chiefly at Belton Grange Preparatory School in Warwickshire and subsequently at Yardley Court in Tonbridge, Kent, before enrolling at a *lycée* in Paris. Eventually he attended Lancing, a public school in West Sussex, shortly before the

outbreak of the Great War. Stuart enlisted in September 1914 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the 9th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Undoubtedly one of the youngest officers in the British forces, he was wounded at the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and later during the assault on Saint-Léger. These injuries caused temporary paralysis of one arm and effectively ended his active military service. In 1918 he married a slightly older English nurse, Eileen Horsman, who had cared for him during his recuperation. During the war his father belatedly informed him that their surname Graham had been adopted and that they were in fact members of the South African Cloete family. In 1925 Stuart chose to take the surname Cloete and had his name legally changed to reflect this preference. The young veteran and his wife farmed briefly on the family's French estate at Condette but in 1925 sailed to South Africa. Cloete briefly employed managed a cotton farm in the Transvaal but spent most of the next decade supervising agricultural undertakings for Frank Struben, a wealthy entrepreneur in Pretoria, near Hamanns-kraal. He also established a dairy farm, Constantia, near Pretoria.[4]

By the mid-1930s the Cloetes' childless marriage was defunct and on the verge of divorce. Encouraged by Sarah Gertrude Millin, E. Arnot Robinson, and other *littérateurs* who visited him at Constantia, Cloete decided to give up farming in favour of a literary career. Following the dissolution of his marriage and the sale of his farm, he left South Africa and settled in London, taking with him a considerable sum of money and visions of becoming a professional writer in the economically depressed British capital. By his own admission, Cloete was not particularly well prepared for this venture, but he believed that paradoxically the limits of his formal education may have allowed him to press ahead with it. "If I had been to Oxford and known more about the work of great writers, I should probably have been too intimidated to enter the literary field", he recalled in his autobiography. Not the lecture theatres of a university, but the trenches of France had imparted to him the rudiments of his education, not least by making the impressionable young man a witness to "a great deal of death". The lonely life of farming in the Transvaal, moreover, had given Cloete "plenty of time to think" and first-hand familiarity with the miracle of life, including the births of more than 400 calves annually. "This combination had a profound effect on me", Cloete confessed in an explication of his fundamental *Lebensanschauung*. "Life and death. This was the key. To be born, to love, to die. All great events in which we are actually face to face with the miraculous".[5]

In London, Cloete energetically sought to hone his rudimentary literary skills. He read and dissected short fiction by such nineteenth and twentieth-century masters as Somerset Maugham, Guy de Maupassant, and Michael Arlen to gain insight into their techniques. He

groused that while many of his contemporaries were stylistically impressive, "most of them had very little to say and took a long time saying it". This perception may shed light on the creation of Cloete's own terse style. Using the *nom de plume* Peter Lawrence, he wrote many short stories which publishers rejected before his agents in Piccadilly were able to sell one titled "Bad Penny" to the *Daily Express*, which carried it on 19 July 1935. Cloete then drafted a novel titled *They Said* set on his farm in the Transvaal. Gollancz rejected it promptly. Heeding the advice of Spencer Curtis Brown and, apparently, stimulated by the publication of Eric Anderson Walker's history of *The Great Trek* in London in 1934, he then began to write on a historical novel about that event. He worked on this major project sporadically for the next two years.[6]

As noted in Chapter IV, Francis Brett Young wrote *They Seek a Country* between December 1937 and May 1937. Neither his nor Cloete's vastly different novel about the Great Trek betrays any influence of the other. Indeed, many years later Young's widow, Jessica, who had co-operated with him closely in his literary career, insisted that her late husband and Cloete had not even heard of each other until their novels about the Great Trek were both published in 1937.[7] Her testimony defies verification from other sources, and it seems entirely plausible that while reading extensively and becoming familiar with a literary circle in London during the 1930s Cloete may have encountered Young's name and even some of his fictional *corpus*. In any case, there is no compelling reason to doubt that the two novels in question were created independently in England and that certain similarities in content can be ascribed to the currency of the theme, about which Eric Anderson Walker had recently published his popular history. It seems entirely plausible that both authors were well aware of the crescendo of publicity surrounding events leading up to the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938 and sought to capitalise on it by publishing their books on the eve of its observation.

As Peter Lawrence, Cloete continued to draft short stories during the mid-1930s, and he sought to improve his skills with the pen by taking a correspondence course in writing, an exercise from which he claimed to have learnt a great deal. Through the intervention of his brother Ronald, he obtained membership in the Savage Club, a liaison which gave Cloete a significantly enhanced network of friends and acquaintances in the cultural life of London. By his own testimony recorded late in life, the aspiring author and recent divorcé was "very high strung and sex-starved during this period while working on *Turning Wheels*. Literary historians must discreetly take such a memory *cum grano salis* and avoid facile assumptions about the projection of Cloete's sexual desires to fictional characters whom he was then creating. With that *caveat* in mind, we can quote his recollection about his libido. He admitted that while in London it had been necessary for

him to "control my desire for women. I knew they were my weakness and that if I gave way I would find myself on the skids. . . . It was the sensuous and sensual that attracted me. The fetishism of pretty clothes, of perfume. The coquetry of courtship, the companionship in which both postponed the logical conclusion". Cloete unabashedly recalled, "I enjoyed watching women dress and undress, do their hair, paint their nails, make up their faces. . . . The sight of a pretty, well-dressed woman always brightened my day, even if she was a prostitute on a street corner. . . . A pretty woman being the chef-d'œuvre of evolution".[8]

What may have been at least as influential as the state of Cloete's sex life in the mid-1930s in determining part of the content of *Turning Wheels* was his understanding of Christianity and religion in general. It can be declared at the outset that there is no evidence that Cloete was ever a "religious" person as that adjective is commonly understood in South Africa or the United Kingdom. Indeed, there is strong reason to believe that he would have rejected such an appellation. The extant evidence is entirely insufficient to chart the contours of Cloete's religious beliefs during the nearly eight decades of his life. At this point we must rely on his memoirs for anecdotal snatches of information as well as his brief explanation of his lack of commitment to any one spiritual or theological position.

Cloete clearly perceived his participation in the First World War as a critical experience in the forming of his view of ultimate realities and his perception of the religious beliefs and practices of the Voortrekkers. Nowhere in his written works is there evidence of theological sophistication, and in *Turning Wheels*, where he analyses in detail certain themes about the religious beliefs and practices of the Voortrekkers, one will search in vain for evidence that he had first-hand knowledge of the subject. Much of what Cloete wrote about it, for that matter, appears to have been borrowed from Walker's recent historical study.

In the first volume of his autobiography, Cloete recalled his encounters with a military chaplain during his convalescence in 1918. These "interesting conversations" in England, while enjoyable, "bore no fruit" because the young officer's experience during the war did not seem to harmonise with his perception of Christianity, of whose fundamental doctrines he appears to have been woefully ignorant. "It was no use him talking about Hell", Cloete remembered in his sometimes curious English usage. "I had just come out of it". On the battlefields of France, "I had seen too many men die. They died calling on God, asking for their mothers, cursing God, or grimly silent. And why a judgment on these young men, almost boys, too young to have really sinned?" Not only the persistent question of theodicy, but also the nature of sin in Christian theology were foreign to Cloete's mind: "Perhaps they had masturbated, had fornicated, some

had committed adultery. But the whole concept of a God so concerned with bedrooms and sex seemed to me slightly blasphemous, even rather ridiculous, assuming the existence of this God". His argumentation about the relationship between war, Christianity, and suffering implodes: "And what about the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill'? When 'over there' we were killing with the blessing of the Church. The Germans, equally blessed, were doing the same. Two Christian nations at each other's throats". Without any apparent sophistication in either theology or logic, it all seemed contradictory to the young convalescent. Having confessed his inability to make sense of the butchery, Cloete admitted to the chaplain "a certain envy of those who had faith and found comfort in their beliefs". His own religious convictions, however, were minimal, extending no further than "being certain there was a power that governed and ordered nature, of which we were a part. I was quite prepared to call this force God". Theism in any sense recognisable to traditional Christianity, however, was alien to his warrior's mind. It seemed incomprehensible that the God of nature "cared for individuals or that he could be placated by prayers and hymns". Yet Cloete evinced some moral sensitivity at that stage and assured the chaplain that he "believed in the sermon [*sic*] on the Mount, the Christian ethic and the golden rule, which I suppose made me an agnostic Unitarian". His spiritual convictions do not appear to have evolved significantly during the next several decades. Late in life, he summarised his position: "I believe in no dogma, no revelation. There is obviously a force which governs the natural order. There was no chaos in the universe till man presumed to interfere with its processes". Without using the term, Cloete professed belief in his variety of pantheism: "This Life Force, this complex order of nature of which we are a part can well be called God, and good is that which is in tune with the design. It could be called love. Evil is anything destructive to good and beauty". He believed that this position had remained essentially unchanged: "These may just be the views of an old man, but except for the wild ambition which possessed me in my youth, I have changed very little".[9] As we shall see shortly, in *Turning Wheels* Cloete paid little attention to the spiritual life of the Voortrekkers and, when he did, he painted it in disparaging terms of religious intolerance and fanaticism; in the conduct and beliefs of the principal character, Hendrik van der Berg, they are manifestly subordinated to egotism and sexual desire.

Virtually none of the extant evidence sheds light directly on Cloete's views of South African politics during the 1930s. He does not appear to have been politically active during that decade, much of which he spend outside the Union of South Africa. When one considers the span of Cloete's life, however, one discovers that he later emerged as a staunch defender of the *status quo* with regard to apartheid. During the 1950s and 1960s this immigrant took up his pen repeatedly

and with increasing vehemence in defence of the country's evolving policy of separate development. Although strictly speaking this dimension of his literary production lies outside the chronological parameters of the present study, a consideration of the basic contours of Cloete's rhetoric in this regard is relevant to our purposes because it further illuminates both his understanding of race relations in Southern Africa and his penchant to perceive from the perspective of a European settler complex social realities in irresponsibly oversimplified categories. His challenges to the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers, in other words, did not prevent him from defending the cardinal racial policies of their desecndants.

The title of an article Cloete contributed to the international edition of the American magazine *Life* in 1953, *i.e.* during the "Defiance Campaign" that the African National Congress and other organisations were waging against the ongoing imposition of apartheid, is itself revealing. "I Speak for the African", he dubbed it. The principal thrust of this piece, published in a thematic issue devoted to Africa, was to highlight the abiding differences between the minds of the indigenous populations of that continent and the Europeans who had imposed their dominating cultures on it. Within this context, Cloete sought to explain reasons for the foment in various parts of Africa which had given rise to demands for independence from European hegemony and also touched on various tangentially related themes. These desires did not spring naturally from native cultures, he thought, but were propagated by discontented Africans who had suffered injustice in urban areas. As a result, "a cold was between the black man and the white is being fostered by this *agent provocateur*" who declares that "Christianity is a lie" and that "they must drive the white man into the sea from which he came". Continuing to heap one generalisation upon another from a decidedly male and South African viewpoint, Cloete asserted that "these Africans are the sons and grandsons of primitive warriors"

and that when the representative indigene viewed Europeans he "sees white men who refuse to acknowledge his humanity". Meanwhile, "he hears rumors [concerning independence movements] from Nigeria, from the Gold Coast, from Kenya and the Congo and his hot, wild blood is stirred". Cloete did not explicitly deny that colonialism had involved vast exploitation of Africa and its peoples, but he insisted in a curious and historically uninformed twist of logic that the European presence on that continent had been at least partially beneficial "since the coming of the white man, who stopped tribal wars, the slave trade and [who] protected his servants against drought and famine". Cloete also underscored what he presumably perceived as his fundamental respect for precolonial peoples in Southern Africa, although the language in which he couched this assertion is no less revealing of his underlying racial attitudes and ignorance

of the region's history. "The old-fashioned country native, the raw *kaffir* of my father's day, has gone for good", he declared. "He was brave, honest and faithful, but in those days the white men were few, of a different type, and neither business nor industry existed in Africa". At the same time, Cloete confessed that ultimately he could not understand what a later generation of literary and cultural critics would term "The Other". "The difficulty is to find the truth", he wrote about the mentality of indigenous Africans. "Even Albert Schweitzer, after a lifetime spent among the natives, says he does not fully understand their minds". Cloete nevertheless ventured out on a limb and passed judgment on the religious beliefs and convictions of African Christians, generalising that "the missions seem not to have produced satisfactory or trustworthy converts". Doubting their sincerity, he concluded that "the tendency is therefore for the natives to use the mission facilities for teaching, for medicine, for food in times of scarcity, and then to revert to savagery or to invent some cult of their own which, although they give it some fancy Christian title, bears no relation to true religion".[10]

By the late 1960s, Cloete had emerged as an unabashed defender of the National Party's apartheid regime. He wrote a book titled *South Africa: The Land, Its People and Achievements* which evinced virtually no artistic or factual originality but merely echoed what had become hackneyed arguments for separate development of ethnic groups in the Republic of South Africa. His explanation for writing this brief volume typifies his conformity to the beleaguered white mind-set during the years after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960: "Because of ignorance and prejudice, the Republic of South Africa is under attack from the U.N. and the ultraliberal intellectuals who control most of the world's media of communication — Television, Radio, the Press, Magazines". Cloete based much of his case on the tenet of racial inequality. "Despite much scientific evidence to the contrary, it is now popular to believe that all men and all races are equal and that individual or national superiority is due to environment alone, having nothing to do with heredity", he lamented. As proof of the untenability of this belief, Cloete asserted that "no great civilization has so far come out of Africa south of the Sahara". This perception undergirded his belief in white superiority. Cloete also foresaw dire consequences of a withdrawal of Europeans in general from South Africa. In the event of such an unlikely demographic transition, "millions of Africans would die in the civil wars and the starvation that would follow in their wake". He consequently pleaded for the preservation in South Africa of what he perceived as a "symbiotic association of black and white men with the direction mainly in white hands because the black[s] are not yet equipped to deal with the manifold problems of a highly industrialized society". In another curious rhetorical twist, the defiant Cloete vowed that he could "speak, with some exceptions,

for all my countrymen — whatever their colour — when I say that we intend to hold on to the republic we have created in this harsh and in some ways inhospitable land. We have resisted attack before and will do so again should it become necessary".[11]

Cloete granted that apartheid "suffers from grave defects" which he did not specify but insisted that it was a viable interim arrangement for coming to grips with the extreme difficulties which multiculturalism had posed in many other societies. "In no African country has multiracialism worked", he argued. "No way has yet been found to safeguard the interests of any minority. This is why tens of thousands of Indians have left Kenya". Furthermore, the vicissitudes of decolonisation in Africa prompted him to conclude that "so far no black state has proved its ability to govern or organize even a comparatively primitive economy on its own". Writing from his home near Cape Town, this highly successful popular author therefore found it ironic that "there should be so much criticism of South Africa where at least there is peace and prosperity".[12]

Plot Summary

The plot of *Turning Wheels* differs markedly from those of *Far Enough* and *They Seek a Country* in terms of such vital historical matters as chronological span, the gallery of characters, and the spectrum of ethnic groups represented. Whereas Eugénie de Kalb spanned most of the nineteenth century and Francis Brett Young covered a period stretching from the 1820s until approximately mid-century in their respective novels, Cloete's concentrated historical framework covers only a few years in the late 1830s and early 1840s. *Turning Wheels* is therefore much less an epic saga than either of these other novels. Geographically Cloete is also more restricted; apart from a sub-plot involving some utterly atypical Boers who venture into East Africa for a few years, he limits his tale to events on the route of the Great Trek itself, opening it at an undisclosed destination and following it through to the northern Transvaal. By contrast, De Kalb, it will be recalled, dealt briefly with events in both the Western and Eastern Cape, Natal, and the South African Republic, while Young's principal character begins his life in England and his other Voortrekkers move in *They Seek a Country* from the Eastern Cape by way of what became the Orange Free State and Natal to the South African Republic. Cloete's gallery of characters rivals those of De Kalb and Young in ethnic breadth, yet there are significant differences. Almost completely absent from *Turning Wheels* are the British, but Cloete creates various Coloured, indigenous African,

Arabic, and other characters who give his novel a noteworthy degree of ethnic diversity without, however, being particularly well developed or credible.

The plot of *Turning Wheels* flows through thirty untitled chapters, nearly all of which are divided into four or more numbered sections. It opens with two Voortrekker leaders, Hendrik van der Berg and Johannes van Reenen, riding at some distance from the caravan of covered wagons bearing the party of Boers, Coloureds, and others whom they are taking north at an early stage of the Great Trek. Van der Berg, a widower in his forties, is sexually attracted to Van Reenen's comely blonde daughter Sannie, as is Van der Berg's son Herman, who, like this young woman, is a teenager. Eventually Herman and Sannie become lovers who plan to marry. Before their wedding takes place, she falls pregnant, a condition of which their parents are unaware. Hendrik van der Berg becomes aware of their intimacy, however, and in his rage shoots his son, claiming to have killed him inadvertently in a hunting accident. He eventually marries Sannie and believes that he is the father of the foetus she is bearing.

Before this happens, however, the first of several assaults by black Africans who resist the incursions of these Voortrekkers takes place. The attack is not particularly devastating, but it allows Cloete to begin to underscore on a grand scale the racial clashes which impeded the Great Trek. A party consisting of men from the Van der Berg-Van Reenen trek and another led by Paul Pieters sets out on a punitive expedition intending to inflict heavy casualties on indigenes in the region and thereby discourage further attacks on their wagons. Scouting for them are an adventurous young Boer named Piete du Plessis, his Amazonian sister Sara, and a Griqua comrade named De Kok. Their assistance proves minimal, but they observe the obliteration of one African village by an *impi* before embarking on an excursion to East Africa with an extraordinary traditional healer whom they name Rinkals. *En route* to the Indian Ocean, this ethnically diverse little party encounters Arabic slave traders and other blacks in incidents which smack of nineteenth-century romances about African life and provide some comic relief from the main narrative line about bedevilled interpersonal relations in the Voortrekkers' wagon train. After approximately three years of roaming in East Africa, the Du Plessis party briefly rejoins that of Van der Berg at a settlement called Canaan which has arisen is evolving in the northern Transvaal.

That community appears to be thriving on this northern frontier of European settlement in Southern Africa as the 1830s yield to the 1840s, but beneath a veneer of prosperity it is doomed. The farms loosely comprising Canaan lie scattered in an area which is vulnerable to attack by the indigenous population of the region, whose hostility to their coming the Voortrekkers clearly

underestimate. Plagues, moreover, enervate the initial energy of the settlers. On the individual level, interpersonal relations are often exploitative. Van der Berg's marriage to Sannie, which is devoid of love and in his eyes exists almost exclusively for his sexual gratification and the continuation of his familial line, is essentially a case of egotistical male domination which she increasingly resents. An erstwhile German military officer who has accompanied this band of Voortrekkers north serves as the indifferent teacher of their children but has little in common with the Boers, whom he views condescendingly, and has his sights on the bored Sannie, whom he eventually seduces. Notwithstanding the Dutch Reformed heritage of the community, its spiritual needs are addressed only rarely by an itinerant minister who holds a service which settlers travel great distances to attend and, among other things, have their children baptised. An equally peripatetic Jewish pedlar visits Canaan to sell his wares to people who long for the accoutrements of European civilisation they have left behind in the Cape.

After the Du Plessis group comes to Canaan, Piete du Plessis convinces Sannie to leave her husband and two children and follow them north in a life more exciting than what she has experienced under Hendrik van der Berg. She agrees and sets off with them. Her enraged, vengeful husband tracks them northward but dies a miserable death after literally shooting himself in the foot. The Du Plessis party again returns to Canaan; Piete seeks without success to lead its efforts to defend itself but together with his paramour and many of the other settlers dies when black Africans in the region rise up and obliterate the settlement.

Fundamental Linguistic Problems in the Text of *Turning Wheels*

Cloete's prose style and related matters are of only secondary interest to the present study. As we shall see in Chapter X, however, some of the many obvious flaws in his representation of Afrikanerdom in a largely English language text helped to undermine what little credibility he might otherwise have had in Afrikaans circles. A brief consideration of this neophyte novelist's mode of expression, especially as it spanned ethnic lines, is thus particularly germane. Most of our focus will be on Cloete's curious amalgam of English and Afrikaans as well as on his careless use of the latter language.

It should be emphasised that apart from a correspondence course in creative writing which he took in London during the mid-1930s, Cloete's formal education ended when he was a teenager in England shortly before the guns of August signalled the outbreak of the First World

War. His many years of farming in France and the Transvaal may have removed him further still from a refined literary command of his native tongue, especially because he does not appear to have read extensively in the literature during that period. At several points, the text of *Turning Wheels* betrays the weakness of his grounding in English grammar and usage. One can therefore read, for instance, that "less calves died" under Anna de Jong's care than on other farms in the Canaan settlement (p. 241), and, with regard to the buffalo that has treed Sara du Plessis, "the shock of his charges were such that she only just succeeded in holding on as the tree bent and swayed beneath them" (p. 329). Concerning the restless personality of Piete du Plessis, Cloete reproduces a common prepositional blunder by stating, "That he was different to others was due to his blood . . ." (p. 258). Some of these gaffes are obviously indictments of unsatisfactory editing, but of course primary responsibility for them lies at Cloete's doorstep and not that of his editor.

Far more consequential for the acrimonious controversy over *Turning Wheels* was the failure - and perhaps inability - of Cloete's publisher in London to curb his penchant for blending English and Afrikaans in ways which shed little if any light on the minds of the Voortrekkers who utter these miscegenated lines or which fail to augment the authenticity of the dialogue, and in some cases merely detract from its credibility by being preposterous. A few examples will illustrate how the effect falls short of what was presumably the intention. When Sara du Plessis asks De Kok specifically where he believes they and her brother should ride, he replies, "Ek wiet nie, just on. Listen mie meisie, the baas wants to go on, that we both know, and I have made up this beautiful lie to tell him" (pp. 115-116). Meanwhile, back at the wagon train, Paul Pieters comments on the difficulty of undertaking a punitive expedition against the indigenes while Piete du Plessis and De Kok are away. "Ons can niks maak till they get back", he explains (p. 42). The same Voortrekker leader turns the phrase *goed genoeg* into "gut genough" (p. 42), which might make cynical readers wonder whether they are reading Afrikaans, German, or English.

As these examples suggest, much of the orthography of the Afrikaans words and phrases which Cloete drops into the text is fractured. Compounding the erroneous nature of these terms, some of them are also misspelt in an incomplete glossary at the end of the book. Again a handful of examples will suffice to illustrate how the text of *Turning Wheels* militates against Cloete's credibility as a commentator on the Afrikaans mind. *Kleinkie* is given as "klienkie" (p. 154), *mielies* as "meilies" (pp. 245, 300), *tot siens* as either "tot sein" (which, curiously enough, is German for "to be dead") or "tot seins" (pp. 300-301, 305, 387), and *van Riebeeck* as "van Riebek" (p. 164). The name of one male Voortrekker is given as "Kleinhouse" (pp. 65, 190, 230). To be sure,

many of these individual flaws might be dismissed as insignificant, but the collective impression is one of ignorance and unreliability, as Afrikaans journalists and other critical readers were quick to point out. Their responses to this aspect of the text will be considered briefly in Chapter X.

Cloete's Understanding of the Origins of the Great Trek

As discussed in Chapter X, for many decades historians in South Africa and elsewhere as well as other observers had recorded differing opinions about the causes and essential nature of the Great Trek. In the study which arguably exercised the most influence on Cloete (and which Francis Brett Young acknowledged as his primary source of general information about this migration), Erik Anderson Walker's *The Great Trek*, the Voortrekkers are paid considerable respect, but hardly adulated, by one from outside their ethnic camp.

In this respect, as in many concerning details of the Great Trek, Cloete unintentionally reveals his reliance on Walker. Actually, however, the aspiring novelist begins with a "pull" factor, to borrow a term from the historiography of emigration and immigration, to explain the geographical direction and sense of destiny of this grand historical episode. On the first page of *Turning Wheels*, we read that the Voortrekkers are proceeding "north to the promised land". This assertion is retrospective interpretation which arguably sheds more light on the minds of their descendants than on the Voortrekkers themselves. In any case, on the following page Cloete goes into more detail when outlining the "push" factors which compelled thousands of Boers to vacate their farms in the Cape and join the undertaking. He calls it "the logical outcome of the freeing of the slaves by the English in the middle of a harvest, so that farmers starved while their crops stood ungarnered, rotting" (p.9). Cloete adds that an exacerbating and intimately related factor was "compensation [for emancipated slaves] paid at a flat rate, as if among slaves, like other live stock, one was not worth more than another" and emphasises that the reimbursement for emancipated servants was only "payable in England, at such a distance that the collection of it often cost more than the sum collected" (p.9). Cloete rounds out his indictment of heavy-handed British colonial officials by referring to "the hangings at Slagtersnek" and "the ravagings of the Kaffirs with which they were no longer allowed to deal after their own fashion" (p.9) as factors which caused Boers in the Eastern Cape to believe that the *status quo* under the new administration was virtually intolerable.

In Chapter Five, Cloete qualifies his generalised portrayal of the Voortrekkers' attitudes towards British imperial rule. Discussing the motivation of Johannes van Reenen for participating in the Great Trek, he states that this widower would have stayed on his farm had his wife not died. Her death provided an "excuse to get away from the farm which had been their home", an explanation which suggests that a measure of adventurism was a contributing factor in the ætiology of this migration. Van Reenen cared little about the political issues which are often cited as underlyling the Great Trek. "He was not a politician, among a nation of them"; indeed, "he was one of the few who did not care who ruled, a man who was happy with his flocks and herds, his pastures and his cultivated fields" (p. 64). Cloete's analysis of the origins of the Great Trek is thus derivative and quite superficial, combining what by the mid-1930s were frequently cited reasons for it with his own perception of the desire of some Voortrekkers to take up a different and more stimulating life than the one to which they had become accustomed in the Cape.

Hendrik van der Berg: The Heroic Myth Inverted

The fact that *Turning Wheels* ignited one of the most explosive controversies in South African literary history can be attributed in large measure to the fact that its central Boer protagonist, Hendrik van der Berg, is a character whose beliefs and behaviour strike at the heart of the myth of the heroic male Voortrekker as an intrepid soul, a dedicated husband and *pater familias*, a paragon of virtue, a level-headed and selfless leader of his people who is committed to maintaining their ethnic identity, and a devout servant of God who could serve subsequent generations of Afrikaners as a model of Afrikaans values. These attributes are not entirely absent in Van der Berg. He is dauntless in facing both man and beast during the trek into the interior of Southern Africa and his pursuit of his fugitive wife and Piete du Plessis.

Van der Berg is also a religious man whose inspiration, or at least his self-justification, springs in part from Biblical sources, although as we shall see this dimension of his personality is not depicted in a favourable light. Virtually everything else about this dominant, pivotal character runs counter to the myth which promoters of Afrikanerdom like Gustav Preller had carefully constructed during the first thirty years of the twentieth century. In his dismantling of this collective image, Cloete employs Van der Berg to considerable effect as evidence of the gaping chasm between historical reality and retrospective ideal.

As an embodiment of Cloete's understanding of male Voortrekkers, Hendrik van der Berg emerges as at once a stereotypical and a unique character. The four words of his name open the text. Cloete relates little about his past until the eleventh chapter, when Van der Berg reads on the fly-leaf of his family Bible that his forebears initially arrived at the Cape as free burghers from the Netherlands in 1657 (p. 164). His pedigree recorded in this volume thus establishes his ethnic credentials. In this respect, there is nothing abnormal about Van der Berg which would distinguish him from the mainstream of Dutch-South African culture. Cloete also describes his physical appearance in general terms. Van der Berg is forty-six years old when *Turning Wheels* opens. His physiognomy suggests typicality, as he is one of the Voortrekkers who are "hard, sunburnt men, bearded like prophets" and who spend many of their waking hours in the saddle (p. 2).

Before the end of the first chapter, however, Cloete develops characteristics in Van der Berg which establish his identity as an individual and set the stage for much of his subsequent behaviour and the disproportionate rôle he plays in projecting the image of male Voortrekkers which their descendants found so objectionable. Two essential and intimately related traits which Cloete emphasises in this regard are the affinity of this man with the animal kingdom and his unbridled sex drive. The earliest physical signs of Van der Berg's animal nature appear less than 2 000 words into the text. This pioneer not only sports a "grizzled beard" but has "strong teeth and great gnarled hands that could throw a bullock, bending its neck sideways till it fell"(p. 6), a description that obviously implies comparison with a predatory animal taking down a hoofed herbivore. Cloete continues to blur the distinction between man and animal when describing Van der Berg. This becomes a recurrent theme in *Turning Wheels*, and in places the metaphoric treatment of Van der Berg reaches grotesque dimensions which compromise credibility. "At the slightest opposition his fangs bared, like those of an old boar, he would turn and rend", Cloete states tellingly in Chapter Seven (p. 104).

Cloete links Van der Berg's primeval nature and instinctive hunting behaviour to his sex life, especially his pursuit of Sannie van Reenen. He is a widower in "full vigour", we learn in Chapter One, who needs her "because his blood was hot" (pp. 9-10). As the blood-smeared Van der Berg dresses a zebra he has slain, he thinks lustfully about the "young and wild" Sannie and reasons that among women, "the wild ones were always the best. It took a man to break them" (p. 11). His sex life with this comely young woman after they wed is virtually devoid of romance and differs little from animal copulation in the wilds and leaves both of them emotionally unsatisfied: "Her pregnancy was the only satisfaction he got from Sannie, for though he took

her often he got nothing from her and left her unassuaged. Left her crushed and gasping, but still triumphant, for if her body was his her spirit remained inviolate and apart" (p. 130). Much later, Van der Berg voices certain other generalisations which reveal that he regards women as merely objects for man's pleasure and for reproduction. After marrying Sannie, he tells her bluntly that "a woman should not have ideas; it was not for thoughts that they were fashioned". Instead, to bear children is their purpose; "all else is a blasphemy and a desecration" (p. 305). Given this underlying attitude, it comes as no surprise that Van der Berg believes that "one did not argue with women. One did not even talk with them" (p. 357).

Buttressing these convictions and running like a scarlet thread through the narrative is the crucial theme of Van der Berg's ego-serving appropriation of Biblical motifs. In this regard he does not stand alone; Cloete apparently wishes to convey his perception, apparently derived from secondary literature (such as Walker's *The Great Trek*), that the Voortrekkers in general saw themselves as latter-day representations of Old Testament figures and thus as instruments of the divine. Van der Berg has little doubt that he is an agent of God's intervention in history, an attitude which some of his mates reinforce. "Ja, my friend, you will lead them to Canaan", Paul Pieters assures him early on, "to the land flowing with milk and honey in the north, you will lead them to the promised land" (p. 70). After a raid on their caravan, a party of fifty men set out to "smite the Philistines" (p. 105) and pray to "the Lord of Hosts" before attacking an African village. Some of these amateur militarists participate in this foray without anxiety, having "faith enough to leave all in the hands of that God who had chosen, so markedly, the Boer people for his own" (p. 111). A Zulu *impi* reaches and destroys the targeted community immediately before these Voortrekkers can assault it, but the latter thank God for protecting them from that tribal army and attribute the violent elimination of that enemy to divine protection (pp. 113-114). After a year and a half of travel, the group finally views its new home, "the promised land", below them as they stand atop a cliff (pp. 134-135). Accordingly, they name it "Canaan" (p. 146). It seemingly possesses all the resources to satisfy their needs as agricultural settlers. When one of the pioneers discovers a salt pan nearby, "Hendrik saw the finger of God in this discovery, but Hendrik saw the finger of God in everything", Cloete explains (p. 150).

In harmony with their prevalent belief in divine purpose, Van der Berg and his fellows perceive natural events that befall them *en route* as signs of God's, sovereignty, favour or wrath. When a flood of previously unexperienced magnitude strikes in the wake of Van der Berg's murder of his son and the laying of plans to massacre the inhabitants of a black African village and steal its livestock, the Voortrekkers do not interpret it as punishment for their sins but rather as an

"exposition of the awful power of their God, the God of Israel, who was a jealous God" (p. 98). Two other instances play on Cloete's employment of the Exodus motif in *Turning Wheels*. When the Voortrekkers suffer from a shortage of water, Van der Berg curses them "for their lack of faith", dismounts, rolls away one of two great stones between which flows a trickle of water, and exposes a spring (p. 131). Not long thereafter, Van der Berg notices a fire on the mountains in the north-west. He interprets this, too, as a sign reminiscent of one in the Pentateuch: "A pillar of smoke by day, a pillar of fire by night. Once more God had directed him, given him guidance" (p. 131). The allusions to Mosaic events in Exodus 13 and 17 are unmistakable.

When problems eventually beset Canaan, these are also interpreted as divine signs. The Voortrekkers are not merely "capable of phenomenal efforts" but also of "phenomenal acquiescence in adversity, taking the manifold blows that were rained upon them as acts of God, sent by him to chasten them", Cloete avers. They perceive repeated tribulation as a series of "trials sent to test their faith, for this God of theirs was no benevolent deity, but a terrible and a jealous God" (p. 268).

This self-styled New Israel in the wilderness is rich in self-serving ethnocentric faith but morally impoverished. Conspicuously absent from many of the characters is any evidence of benevolence or other probity. To be sure, they co-operate, often quite harmoniously, when in either defensive or offensive armed conflict with black Africans and while hunting big game, and at times they are capable of conversing civilly. Otherwise, they are a back-biting, conniving lot who murder, covet, and commit adultery in one chapter after another. Their worldly leader, Hendrik van der Berg, outstrips them all.

This is especially ironic because this Voortrekker perceives himself in explicitly Abrahamic terms as not only the progenitor of a planned clan but also as the patriarch of a nation in the wilderness. This postfigurative self-understanding emerges early on when Van der Berg, motivated by his lust for Sannie van Reenen and his discovery of her intimacy with his son, takes his cue from Genesis 22 and slays Herman, whose sin of fornication is a realisation of Hendrik's own desires. His selective reading of the Bible (exclusively the Old Testament) also provides his warped justification for filial homicide:

> He had prayed, God had given him guidance, and he had punished the seducer. Like Abraham, God had demanded the sacrifice of his Isaac. Unlike Abraham, God had not saved his son. Why had he not? Why had God, the omnipotent, not caused his gun to misfire? or the boy to return a different way? Why? Because

> God had meant him to be punished for his sin, and he, Hendrik van der Berg, had been God's chosen instrument of vengeance (p. 103).

After the settlement of Canaan, Van der Berg continues to identify with Abraham and nurture his patriarchal ambitions. He envisages a large number of progeny and wonders whether he is, "like Abraham, to be the father of a multitude?" (p. 193) Again, however, his sex drive provides the impetus to this identification with that patriarch. Discontented with his intimacy with his unresponsive wife Sannie, Van der Berg desires-- and eventually has--sexual intercourse with Louisa, Anna de Jong's Coloured maid, but uses her solely as an instrument for the satisfaction of his craving. Adding another egotistical dimension to his religious rationalising, he credits God for his great lust: "And of what good is one woman to a man like me?" he asks himself. "I am the instrument of God, and it is He who has made me as I am" (p. 194). After committing adultery with Louisa, Van der Berg justifies that action on the grounds that God desires human multiplication. Furthermore, he perceives a parallel between Genesis 17:6 and his own promiscuous sex life. "Had not God said to Abraham, 'And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee?'" (p. 222)

To sum up, Cloete's Hendrik van der Berg has very little in common with the image of Voortrekker leaders which Gustav Preller and other Afrikaner nationalists had cultivated earlier in the twentieth century and which remained at the fore during the festivities marking the centenary of the Great Trek. To be sure, he is courageous and persevering, but in terms of Christian spirituality, dedication to his family, sexual morality, and other virtues Van der Berg is a villain who contradicts assumed values far more than he embodies them. The prominence of this provocative character in *Turning Wheels*, particularly his willingness to sire interracial children and his jusification to kill his own son on perverse, self-serving Biblical grounds, could only infuriate Afrikaners who bothered to read this novel or otherwise pay it some heed.

Paul Pieters: Another Antiheroic Male Voortrekker

The other prominent Voortrekker leader in *Turning Wheels*, Paul Pieters, reinforces in certain basic respects the prevailing image which Cloete develops of male Boers. In some respects his personality and opinions mirror, or at least overlap with, those of Hendrik van der Berg, but these two men are kindred spirits rather than spiritual twins. Cloete does not develop Pieters

nearly as well as Van der Berg, and part of his portrayal of him is weakly stereotypical. Pieters is introduced as a man virtually born to his rôle in the Great Trek. Signs of this are evident. He is introduced in Chapter Three as "an enormous man with a great black beard, standing six foot six in his bare feet, weighing two hundred and one pounds stripped". His chest is described as a "great barrel", but otherwise Cloete relates few physical attributes. Though still in his thirties, this towering Voortrekker has "already acquired a great reputation as a leader" whose guidance of migrating Boers includes a pronounced racial component. Pieters combines "an almost reckless courage with a tactical astuteness which made him one of the foremost and certainly the most feared of the Kaffir fighters". After the attack on Van der Berg's wagon train, Pieters suggests to him that they "hunt Kaffirs together for a month". Their successes in taking revenge, he vows, will make their names known among the survivors of their victims (pp. 31-32). In one of the many linkages of human and animal conduct which characterise parts of *Turning Wheels* and reflect Cloete's natural *Weltanschauung*, Pieters expresses a lack of concern about the probability that his and Van der Berg's two horses will fight if allowed to graze together. Van der Berg is less enthusiastic about the prospect of their mounts inflicting wounds on each other, but Pieters declares, "Then in God's name let him fight. Let them get it over quickly. It is the will of God that these things should be, and who are we to stand between God and His will?" (p. 32) His warfare against indigenous Africans is also waged, though obliquely, in God's name. He and Van der Berg sally forth "to smite the Philistines", suggesting that the "visionary" Pieters has accepted his counterpart's belief that they are divinely appointed leaders of a chosen race whose destiny it is to establish a New Israel in the wilderness (p. 105).

Cloete acknowledges that Pieters is an invaluable asset to those Voortrekkers over whom he exercises responsibility, not least the Van der Berg party following the assault on it. This powerful, rough-hewn man satisfies an acute need. He has "with his immense vitality . . . buoyed them up. His laughter, his rude fervour, his enthusiasm, had all become definite factors in their lives; without him and his followers things seemed flat[,] and though still numerous they felt very along and isolated after his departure" (p. 127). In striking contract to his description of Hendrik van der Berg, there is virtually nothing in Cloete's construction of this dynamic character with which the descendants of the Voortrekkers could find fault.

Herman van der Berg: A Romantic Young Male Voortrekker

The part which Hendrik van der Berg's teenaged son, Herman, plays in *Turning Wheels* is necessarily brief before he falls victim to his father's violent jealousy, but it embodies several Boer values and adds a vital human dimension to Cloete's general portrayal of male Afrikanerdom, namely romantic love. When Herman is presented in the opening chapter, he is only eighteen years old but "already a man" and well into the process of sexual maturation. Cloete also underscores his virility as a young man with "swelling powerful thighs" and "calf muscles that bulged his moleskin trousers". In the same paragraph in which Herman makes his *entrée*, he is attracted to Sannie van Reenen's face and figure, and much of his subsequent conduct *vis-à-vis* that comely lass is clearly motivated by his desire to enter into a long-term sexual relationship with her (pp. 4-5).

Herman's first recorded conversation with Sannie is a plea to consider him as a prospective husband. His argument explicitly illuminates male Voortrekker values. He denigrates possible rivals on the trek as "small men, small of stature, of mind and heart" who, in his perception, are not his equal. "I will match myself against any of them in shooting at a mark, in hunting, in riding", he vows, adding that "compared to me, they are poor men" (p. 6).

Herman also participates actively as an armed fighter during the attack on the wagon train, although he meets his match in a hand-to-hand encounter with a black man. Drawing a knife, young Van der Berg hurls himself with abandon on a large indigene who counters by raising a stabbing spear as gunfire fills the air. Only Sannie's intervention with a rifle saves her paramour from almost certain death in combat (pp. 20-22). His participation in this brief battle does little to enhance his development as a character and is not organically connected to his subsequent behaviour or thoughts in the plot. Cloete probably created the episode chiefly in the interest of the sensationalism which burdens several sections of *Turning Wheels*.

What is developed further in the brief consideration of Herman, however, is his sexuality. In another typical Cloetian linkage of human and animal behaviour, Herman's sexual maturation is placed into a quasi-naturalistic context. With spring approaching, the young man's sexual appetite waxes like that of many mammals. He likens Sannie to a provocative and beautiful horse who seemed to blow both hot and cold in her responses to his advances. Weary of this game, Herman decides to allow her "to choose quickly, for there were other women, and the coming spring was in his blood" (p. 39). In a candid conversation with Sannie, he explicitly compares

his sex drive with those of various animals, albeit it euphemistic terms: "The winter is over, the trees are putting out their flowers, already the bees are beginning to swarm, and birds fly about courting. In the kraals the bulls are arching their backs and the cows restless; everywhere the sap is rising, and it is not good for a man to live alone" (p. 53). His approach is successful; Cloete announces in Chapter Five that Herman and Sannie begin to have intercourse in her wagon long before the Van der Berg trek reaches its destination (p. 66).

The other function which Herman has in Cloete's plot is, of course, essentially passive; he becomes the victim of his father's religiously violent jealousy. In this very little more light is shed on the younger Van der Berg's personality or behaviour, but the fact that he gives vent to his passions allows Cloete to set up the only marginally plausible incident in which his father slays him with little compunction for temporarily frustrating his own desire to take Sannie van Reenen as his wife.

Jappie de Jong: An Obsequious Adulterer

Cloete carefully avoids creating a uniform set of male Voortrekkers. Not even with regard to those attributes which he and his defenders subsequently insisted he had underscored as laudatory, such as bravery, do all the men of the Great Trek live up to the idealised standard. Near the beginning of the second chapter Cloete indirectly introduces Jappie de Jong, who in certain respects is the antithesis of Hendrik van der Berg, although the two men's sexual drives overlap. In contrast to nearly all the other Boers, De Jong is "small", although few other details about his physical appearance are given. No less significantly, he is a "meek man" whose personality is overshadowed by that of his wife (p. 14). De Jong's active appearance in *Turning Wheels* is brief, ending when a spear penetrates his neck during the first raid on the wagon train. Underscoring De Jong's spousal obsequiousness, Cloete chooses to relate nearly everything about this minor figure through his wife both before and after that encounter. Through her thoughts, readers are first introduced to the theme of interracial sexual intercourse. She knows that her diminutive husband has "one of her coloured maids as his mistress" (p. 14). Cloete nowhere describes this relationship, although as we shall see shortly he presents De Jong's resignation to and rationalising of the affair.

Piete du Plessis: The Voortrekker as Romantic and Violent Adventurer

Cloete's gallery of male Voortrekkers reaches its apogee of nonconformity to the prevailing stereotype in Piete du Plessis, popularly called "Zwart Piete", a free-spirited individual who carries individuality to an extreme while parading his disregard for virtually any sense of community. This young man is introduced in Chapter Three as a nephew of Paul Pieters while that leader and Hendrik van der Berg plan to take revenge on the Africans who have interrupted the progress of the latter's party (p. 31). That Du Plessis fits their scheme soon becomes obvious. His short life has been filled with militant racial strife. During his childhood, Du Plessis began to acquire his considerable skills as a scout, and he first killed an African at age twelve. "Since then he had fought Kaffirs without ceasing", emphasises Cloete (pp. 45-46), carrying a supposed dimension of Voortrekker conduct to a satirical extreme. Reiterating the point, Du Plessis is saddened when he learns of a battle that has taken place in his absence. "He was always sorry when he missed the chance of killing a Kaffir" (p. 123).

Du Plessis does not destroy human life dispassionately or without a pecuniary motive. When he sallies forth to hunt them on behalf of his uncle and Van der Berg, he is delighted to discover a vulnerable African village: "He hated Kaffirs and here they were in hundreds waiting to be killed, and here were cattle in thousands, waiting to be driven off" (p. 85). Nor is Du Plessis a paragon of mercy. He envisages how the Voortrekkers could surround and obliterate the village: "Caught between two fires they would be able to kill them, men, women and children. Kill them and burn their huts" (p. 85). His vision, of course, is the mirror image of the devastation which Africans eventually wreak on the Voortrekker settlement in the northern Transvaal. Cloete thereby underscores how the unwillingness of these migrants to live in a state of peaceful co-existence with their indigenous neighbours leads indirectly to their own demise.

The violent racism which Du Plessis embodies is by no means unique to this character; Cloete stresses repeatedly that many other Voortrekkers also overflow with hatred of black Africans. What sets du Plessis apart from them is his extreme *Wanderlust* and concomitant rejection of the sedentary agrarian life which typifies depictions of male Voortrekkers in general. Cloete attributes this in part to the pedigree of this "hard, dangerous young man": "That he was different to others was due to his blood, to the admixture of Huguenot in his blood which would not give him rest but sent him on, involving him till he was beyond drawing back" (p. 258). This assertion fits well the literary stereotype of Huguenots in South Africa on which Brett Young relied in certain

characters in *They Seek A Country*, but it hardly explains why Du Plessis is almost totally averse to farming and serving as an integral part of a community while many other men of similar descent had developed extensive farms in the Cape and would continue to do so in what became the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. Whatever the cause, Du Plessis is convinced that he cannot live without migrating. As he explains to his uncle, "I do not think that I am a farmer, Oom Paul. It is in my heart that I must always move. That I cannot wake to see the same mountains each morning, that I cannot watch the sun set over the same tree day after day" (pp. 262-263).

Cloete also emphasises that Du Plessis grazes outside the fold of the Voortrekker faithful with regard to Christian spiritual nourishment. Apart from thanking God for his fine horse and occasionally making allusions to relatively familiar Biblical texts, he does not show signs of having been influenced by the religious faith that prompted his Reformed ancestors to leave their native France and settle near the southern tip of Africa. While discussing the future of the Canaan settlement, which Du Plessis believes is vulnerable to attack, Van der Berg asks him whether he is "without faith". The restless young man replies, "I have faith in three things, Hendrik, myself, my gun and my horse" (p. 295). Again unnecessarily overemphasising the point, Cloete uses the most conservative Christian voice in the settlement, that of a Dopper, to call attention to the cleft between Du Plessis and any sense of religious community. This occurs when Du Plessis visits Canaan and, in a passage possibly inspired by prophetic utterances in the Hebrew Scriptures, warns of its imminent demise. Like those of Amos and other prophets, his message of doom is unwelcome and rejected. The unnamed Dopper who appears to voice this rejection declares flatly, "You can leave our company and go back to the wilds where you belong", adding that if Du Plessis refuses to heed his admonition he would be hunted (p. 387).

Cloete adds a vital dimension to this hate-filled character by underscoring that during his years of wandering in East Africa he has become personally acquainted with the indigenous peoples whom he previously hated. Precisely how this *metanoia* comes about is not fully clear. At any rate, when Du Plessis visits Canaan he can respond affirmatively when Hendrik van der Berg asks whether it is true that "you have friends among the wild Kaffirs" (p. 275). The young adventurer adds, nearly as revealingly, that his change of heart also involves his ethnic fellows. Explaining to Van der Berg why he has left East Africa, Du Plessis states, "It was in my heart to see my folk again" (p. 275). Yet this agitated Huguenot descendant has not really become a humanitarian or builder of interethnic bridges. A fighter to the marrow of his bones, he eventually

seeks with limited success to preserve the Voortrekker settlement from black African resistance and dies in this futile attempt in the penultimate chapter of *Turning Wheels*.

The overall place of Piete du Plessis in *Turning Wheels* is arguably essentially that of a curiosity who contributes to the romantic dimension of this tale but adds virtually nothing to Cloete's representation of the Voortrekkers and the Great Trek as such. This adventurer stands too obviously outside the pale of normative male Voortrekker behaviour to be taken seriously as one of them. To be sure, in places he serves as a foil for more staid characters like Hendrik van der Berg and the Dopper who wishes him to leave. In doing so, he reinforces by glaring contrast the characteristics which Cloete represents as more typical attributes of the Voortrekkers.

The Enigmatic Anna de Jong: Challenging Idealised Voortrekker Femininity

There are relatively few female characters in *Turning Wheels*, and Cloete develops only three Voortrekker women to any significant degree. All of them contradict to varying degrees the prevailing stereotype of the pious, virtuous, maternally orientated female Voortrekker that had evolved early in the twentieth century. Easily the most intriguing of the women in *Turning Wheels* and arguably its most complicated character is Anna de Jong, an elderly, worldly-wise person who serves not merely as an added dimension in Cloete's gallery of Voortrekkers but also as a commentator on the Great Trek itself and certain interpersonal relationships amongst the migrants. This woman merits detailed consideration.

To be sure, in introducing Anna de Jong Cloete relies on conventional stereotyping. By early in the twentieth century, obesity was a sign of Afrikaner womanhood in English South African writing.[13] Anna de Jong's physique carries this to an extreme. Cloete's description of her at the beginning of Chapter Two is among the most graphic portrayals of any individual in *Turning Wheels*:

> It was very hot and her vast bulk sagging, sweated acridly. From the rolls of fat round her neck perspiration poured down her back, staining the material of her dress; from under chin it ran in the rivers over her chest, accumulated and seeped through the narrow channel of her heavy breasts into the creases of her paunch, over its massive folds, on to the bulging thighs on which it rested. Her arms, like legs of mutton, incased in black cotton, were folded. Her head sunk forward,

> nodded as the wagon rolled on. Her small eyes, black, shining buttons sunk into her cheeks, opened and closed like those of an animal that rested, watchfully (p. 13).

Cloete returns to this mode of description in Chapter Ten, where he declares categorically that "nowhere in the world was there a bigger woman, or any one who was more a woman than Anna de Jong. Rounded till her convexities intersected, forming a ponderous mass of female matter, a thing that was all but oval, as specialised as a queen ant to her function of maturity" (p. 153). Yet this obese woman can function rapidly when necessity dictates. Like many of her counterparts in Voortrekker lore, De Jong helps to defend her laager. Indeed, during the ambush described in detail in Chapter Two, she is transformed in a second into a warrior: "Her years and fat fell from her. . . . Picking up the blunderbuss loaded with slugs that hung from its sling above her, she jumped through the curtained front of the wagon on to its bed" and begins to issue orders to others (p. 17).

De Jong apparently perceives herself first and foremost in natural terms as an agent of human reproduction in ways which - in typical Cloetean form - underscore her anchoring in nature and particularly her affinity with the animal kingdom. Gazing at her massive breasts, she recalls that in her younger days she lactated enough milk to nurse three babies. "Like a cow I was, she though happily. . . .Ja, she had udders like a cow once and that was because she had plenty of blood" (pp. 15).

As this suggests, De Jong is a product of an agrarian environment who thinks partly in terms of agricultural metaphors. She longs for the pigs, poultry, and orchards of her erstwhile farm home near Paarl (p. 27). (Curiously enough, De Jong also recalls having lived near the Great Fish River in the Eastern Cape [p. 154]; Cloete leaves this seeming contradiction unexplained.) Accordingly, after settling at Canaan as a widow, she thinks that "a pig, more particularly a sow, was symbolic of settled occupation with its gruntings, wallowing, and swarms of squealing piglings" (p. 197). In the concluding paragraph of *Turning Wheels*, after the destruction of Canaan and the scattering of many of its settlers, De Jong resigns herself to her compromised lot in life and chooses to carry on with her aspirations on a limited scale: "What she wanted now was comfort, a place to grow her vegetables and where she could keep pigs" (p. 434).

What adds at least as much dimension to Anna de Jong as a literary character, however, is the ambiguity of her relationship to God and her attitudes towards life and human relationships. She evinces at times the influence of her Dutch Reformed upbringing. To be sure, this unlettered woman has no appreciation of metaphorical language from the pulpit; she recalls hearing her

minister in Paarl speak about Moses causing the Red Sea to divide and faith moving mountains. All of this had struck her as useless. "Men, even men of God, were so unpractical", De Jong concludes (p. 14). After settling at Canaan, she is unenthusiastic about the announced visit of a clergymen. Cloete describes the cause of her reaction: "Her scepticism, the natural outcome of her experiences, had resulted in a wide tolerance that took exception at nothing but the bigoted cruelties inflicted in the name of religion and the hypocrisy of some of its ministers. Black crows that demanded tithes, who stood watching disaster, rubbing their hands softly together" (p. 374). She consequently attends services chiefly for the opportunity they provide to socialise (pp. 374-375). De Jong is nevertheless a somewhat spiritually orientated person. After her husband Jappie is killed and has been buried, she visits his grave daily to pray and to thank God that for the time being she can be near his worldly place of rest (p. 35). Again and again De Jong expresses an almost fatalistic faith in God's providence. She can accept the death of her several children by reminding herself that "the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away" (p. 16). She repeats this sentiment at least twice (pp. 197, 346). Contemplating the enmeshed relationships involving Sannie van Reenen and Hendrik van der Berg, De Jong concludes that while the mills of God sometimes turn slowly, she can smile at the results, at the "efficiency of providence, at the justice of God" (p. 240). In true Calvinist style, she sees the hand of God at work in every aspect of life, including the barrenness of a sow (p. 241).

Yet De Jong's faith in divine providence has its limits. Perhaps most notably, with regard to the hand of God in directing the Great Trek, she has her doubts. When Van der Berg decides that his party will descend into an immense valley and establish their settlement below, she questions whether it is the will of God (p. 136). Her faith can also be self-serving at times. While seeking to establish a small farm at Canaan, De Jong rationalises her proposed acquisition of a sow by ethically questionable means: "By doing this I perform an act of charity which God will reward, and soon we shall have the only pigs in the north country" (p. 188).

Furthermore, De Jong combines moral precepts with an arguably cynical acceptance of human misconduct. She alludes repeatedly to the Scriptures in declaring that one reaps what one sows (p. 315), urging that one not worry about the morrow but allow today's concerns to be sufficient (pp. 347-348), and quoting Lamentations about leopards not being able to change their skins (p. 389). De Jong upbraids Van der Berg for decontextualising Biblical texts to justify his selfish ends (p. 344), but she demonstrates an amazing ability to do likewise in rationalising her husband's adulterous relationship with Louisa on the basis of Old Testament precedents for such conduct (p. 14). Her personality and conduct are thus both complicated and resist facile

classification. In many respects De Jong is arguably the most artistically developed character in *Turning Wheels* and its most realistic. That she also stands almost poles apart from the cultivated image of Voortrekker womanhood hardly needs amplification.

Sannie van Reenen: Departing from Stereotypical Voortrekker Womanhood

Sannie van Reenen also shatters the stereotypical image of female Voortrekkers, though in ways quite different from those of Anna de Jong. None of Van Reenen's characteristics stands out in bolder relief than her sexuality. In the third section of Chapter One, Cloete establishes her beauty and her attractiveness to both young and older male Voortrekkers who repeatedly find excuses to approach the wagon on which she rides with her slender legs exposed (pp. 3-4). Her sexual maturation is also underscored. As her father's wagon rolls across the *veld*, the sixteen-year-old Sannie van Reenen alters her best frock for the third time to make it accommodate her swelling breasts (p. 6). Her sexuality is not merely passive; she ponders possible unions with both Hendrik and Herman van der Berg. Again, Cloete expresses her thoughts in zoological terms: "Did the filly mate with the untried colt? or with the stallion, scarred by a hundred battles?" (p. 5).

Cloete does not pass explicit judgement on the guilt or innocence of Sannie's loss of virginity. He describes this milestone in her life discreetly in natural terms as she copulates with Herman van der Berg, comparing it to the changing of seasons: "Her life, like a bud, had opened out; warmed by the hot blood in her veins it had blossomed to-night. Her eyes darkened, their pupils widening at her thoughts, her lips parted. Now she was a woman" (p. 66). There is not a word of authorial commentary about the incompatibility of Sannie van Reenen's conduct in this regard and the moral strictures of the Dutch Reformed Church. Nevertheless, to anyone familiar with *Far Enough* or, for that matter, *They Seek A Country*, Van Reenen's moral standards obviously are not those which Eugénie de Kalb and Francis Brett Young present as typical of female Voortrekkers. The extent of Sannie's premarital sex life with Herman van der Berg is not disclosed. In any case, Cloete emphasises repeatedly that Herman has impregnated her before she marries his father (pp. 125, 129, 158).

Sannie's departures from the ideals of Dutch Reformed Christian morality shift from fornication to adultery after she enters into this loveless, exploitative marriage. She understands virtually from the outset that Hendrik van der Berg is merely using her for his pleasure and as

a means towards achieving his goal of creating more descendants. "Was she a mare or a heifer, she asked herself. Merely something to be bred from?" (p. 225) During her second pregnancy, which is apparently by Hendrik, she realises that "this time she was getting nothing out of the child she bore under her heart, nothing except the excuse it afforded her to avoid the attentions her husband still tried to force upon her. As she thought of Hendrik she knew suddenly that she hated him . . ." (pp. 228-229). One of Sannie's few recorded thoughts about God is her conviction that divine intervention will liberate her from her marriage (p. 229). Isolated on her farm in the Canaan settlement and longing for the love of someone other than Hendrik van der Berg, she is vulnerable to the desires of Otto von Rhule and, paradoxically, begins to love him because he does not particularly care for her. Precisely how this tryst unfolds Cloete does not say; it is merely a temporary intrusion into the text which underscores Sannie's estrangement from her husband and disregard for community moral standards (p. 239).

Nor is an unwavering commitment to the obligations of motherhood among the arrows in Sannie's quiver. After Piete du Plessis completes his multi-year foray with his sister and De Kok into East Africa, he stays briefly in Canaan and becomes sexually involved with Sannie, notwithstanding her marriage to Van der Berg. Du Plessis invites her to abandon her unhappy situation there and accompany him on his expeditions. Weighing her secure if unloved status as his wife against her fascination with Du Plessis and the life of adventure fleeing with him would entail, she elects the latter, "in spite of the Boer tradition of chastity and faithfulness" (p. 325). Her decision is complicated by the fact that her son and daughter are still toddlers. Sannie nevertheless opts for the latter (p. 298). Cloete displays little imaginativeness in describing what many other authors might have explored as an agonising dilemma rich in dramatic tension. He merely declares flatly: "It was going to be hard to leave Jacoba and Frikkie, but things were hard, and there was no answer to this but one, either she must stay with her children or she must go, there could be no half measures" (p. 306).

Sara du Plessis: A Female Voortrekker as Amazon

Cloete's third female Voortrekker, Piete du Plessis's Amazonian, pock-marked twin sister, can be treated more briefly. This character, though fairly well limned, stands too far outside the conventional scope of Voortrekker womanhood to present a serious challenge to its historic norms or its twentieth-century image, although it is conceivable that she is included in the novel

in an effort to break the bonds of the prevailing stereotype. Indeed, Cloete emphasises in introducing her that she is an outcast and sometimes shunned as a mutation: "In the camp she felt the eyes of the people upon her. Some sniggered as she passed, nudging each other. Some offered her the indignity of their sympathy while others ignored her, passing her by as though she was something unnatural, unclean". He also suggests that some kind of genetic accident may be at fault. "What had gone wrong in the darkness of their mother's womb that she had been formed like this?" he asks. "That in all but her organs she was a man. That her strength was that of a man, and that with this she should have been given a woman's heart, and that then, on top of everything, as if it were not enough, had come her illness, the pox that had ravaged her" (p. 116). Yet there is no hint of homosexual conduct, and her manliness has its limits. Despite her appearance, Sara feels like "a woman, curiously soft and tender with a longing for a home, and for children clinging to her skirts" (p. 176).

In at least one respect, however, Sara du Plessis meshes well with several of the other characters in *Turning Wheels*, namely in her racist attitudes. While describing her participation in a scouting excursion with her brother and De Kok, Cloete declares without reserve, "She hated Kaffirs as much as her brother, and had killed nearly as many as he" (p. 142). Accordingly, this tough-minded, rifle-bearing woman hunts both animals and people "savagely" and, owing to her lack of acceptance in Voortrekker society, she can be "quite merciless" when shooting either (p. 177).

Cloete could have developed Sara du Plessis to a considerably greater extent, although her part in *Turning Wheels* is almost exclusively apart from the Voortrekker community as she rides with her brother and De Kok through the expanses of the northern Transvaal and East Africa. Without radically changing this character, it would have been difficult for Cloete to employ her as a participant in the Great Trek itself or in the Canaan settlement. However fascinating she is to the romance of hunting and other adventure that Cloete appended to his consideration of the Great Trek as it was commonly understood, she simply does not fit the Voortrekker mould at all. After her brother elopes with Sannie, Sara sees no future for herself. At age twenty-three, she believes that most of her life is past (p. 326). Her lethal encounter with a wounded male buffalo proves her correct, though obviously for a reason different from what she believed.

Cloete's Generalisations about the Voortrekkers

In addition to creating this variegated gallery of individual Voortrekker characters, Cloete uses authorial commentary and other means to describe Voortrekkers in general. The image which emerges from many such comments cannot be fully divorced from the traits which the individuals embody, of course, but Cloete's generalisations provide additional insight into his perception of these migrants in general and, one might argue, his perception of Afrikaners during the 1930s.

In many of his overarching statements, Cloete pays tribute to characteristics which have been repeatedly emphasised as pillars of Afrikaner self-identity as well as the retrospective image of the Voortrekkers which Gustav Preller and others had created early in the twentieth century. He declares, for example, that the Great Trek was "the seepage of a small, great-hearted people into a continent" and acknowledges the self-confidence and love of liberty of the Voortrekkers and establishes on the second page of the novel the religious underpinnings of this as a motivating agent: "Secure in the knowledge that they were the chosen race, certain of their capacity to endure, and forced on by the Boer necessity for space and freedom, they followed rivers to their sources, crossed the great water-sheds and followed new rivers; hunting, fighting, and reading the Bible as they wandered" (p. 2).

In the same section of the first chapter, however, Cloete calls attention to an unsavoury group attribute which becomes a *Leitmotiv* in *Turning Wheels*. He explains how Boers in the Cape had become alienated by both heavy-handed treatment from British colonial officials and "the ravagings of the Kaffirs" and explains that as a consequence all the men leading the Great Trek "had been reared to hatred" (p. 3). The initial image which Cloete thus creates of Voortrekkers in general is thus self-contradictory and possibly underscores the collective hypocrisy of people who have a compelling sense of religious faith but whose secular desires and hatred are at least as strong as their commitment to Christianity. It is difficult to know whether Cloete consciously presented a complex and deliberately ambiguous of these Voortrekkers or, as a neophyte novelist, simply did not maintain a firm grasp of his characters throughout his relatively long text.

In subsequent chapters of *Turning Wheels*, Cloete highlights what he regarded as other traits shared by many Voortrekkers, some of which are found in the secondary literature, such as Walker's *The Great Trek*. Cloete strives to give them a recognisable human face by emphasising, for example, their love of music and dancing, although he does not define these passions in detail.

He does, however, explain that the latter activity is a social binding agent. In one *laager*, "couples whirled round in one another's arms, broke up into units or linked into chains of humanity which wove in and out of each other in the warp and woof of the round dances" (p. 56). All the while, the men are armed and keep guard for a possible attack.

Despite their love of socialising on occasion, Cloete's Voortrekkers are essentially an introverted lot who do not regard community life as a priority. He expresses this in what on the surface appear to be hyperbolic terms: "What they liked was to live apart, so far apart that they could not see each other's smoke, and then at intervals to foregather for a nachtmaal or inspanning their oxen to go on a tour of visiting which might last months, calling on every one they knew, going even hundreds of miles to do so" (pp. 145-146). Cloete may have ventured beyond the secure perimeter of his research in emphasising that this pattern of settlement and inconsistent social interaction militated against the establishment and maintenance of a stable, inclusive society beyond the nuclear family: "On the move, they got on well enough with each other, but any form of closely knit communal life was contrary to their natures, their ideal being the patriarchal family unit, but even this, to please them, must be sub-divided into its integral parts of a man, his woman and their children" (p. 145). Perhaps owing to a dearth of social and intellectual cross-fertilisation, but also to a longing for more stable lives than those they were living during the Great Trek, the Voortrekkers long to "force their lives back into its [*sic*] static pattern". Conservative by nature, Cloete's Boers seek not to evolve culturally but rather to reproduce the kind of society they had known before British influences crept in early in the nineteenth century (p. 146). To a considerable extent they succeed, establishing familiar institutions which correspond to their "simple minds" (p. 247). The buildings, cattle kraals, and other structures which they erect are thus familiar. The Voortrekkers of Canaan have relatively few material desires apart from those which meet their basic needs. They are content "because they were free to live a comfortless life" on their farms. The general mentality which dominates the settlement is thus rigid: "Immovable in their faith and because of their simplicity, their lack of elasticity, very terrible, for nothing would sway or move them" to adapt more carefully to their new surroundings (p. 237). To the cynical German von Rhule, however, whom Cloete calls "the only educated man" in the Canaan settlement, it is obvious that this conservative society, despite its "fictitious prosperity", cannot prevail. He "watched the slow disintegration of the Boers with interest, saw the inevitability of the end and awaited it with curiosity" (p. 250). In the end, of course, it is the inflexibility of the Voortrekkers, their inability to adapt to their surroundings, and their adamant refusal to take sufficiently seriously the gravity of the indigenes' threat to their incursion that doom them.

Cloete mentions that plagues sapped the vigour of the community (p. 254), but this also suggests a failure to find an appropriate environment and adapt to it.

De Kok: A Griqua Bastard as Voortrekker

In his informative if unrefined study of literary representations of the Coloureds in South Africa, V.A. February briefly discusses *Turning Wheels*. Ironically enough, however, he fails to deal with the Coloured characters in that novel, other than stating incorrectly that one unspecified male Voortrekker in it (undoubtedly Hendrik van der Berg) had "sought release with his coloured hand-maid in the process of which he fathered a host of half-breeds".[14] In fact, Cloete recognises the historically significant rôle which people of mixed race played in the Great Trek by creating two relatively central figures, both of whom fail to evolve into well-developed characters. Piete du Plessis's servant, "a Griqua Bastard called de Kok", emerges in the third section of Chapter Three. Referring to his group of Voortrekkers, Paul Pieters informs Hendrik van der Berg that most of them have trailed behind, because "only young Piete and his skellum of a boy can keep up with me" (p. 32). Apart from being the victim of this condescending, racist appellation, however, De Kok does not actively enter the plot until Chapter Five, when Cloete uses his example to convey his perception of the genesis of the Coloured section of the South African ethnic kaleidoscope and prevalent characteristics of this group. This young hybrid's complex personality has sprung not from his environment but from the ethnic strains in his family tree. "De Kok was a gambler, inheriting the instinct from his admixture of eastern blood, that of slave craftsmen imported from Batavia", Cloete explains authoritatively. "A hunter, from the blood of Hottentot and Bushmen with whom they had been mated, a man of overwhelming ambition, this last a gift of his white male ancestors who for generations had taken his coloured female ones". Miscegenation had continued in the family. De Kok's mother, Katarina Kok, had been the property of a wealthy farmer named Van de Winter, who "had entertained a great deal" and apparently exploited Mev. Kok in this regard. She was therefore not certain who had sired her son apart from the fact that he had been a white man. This ethnic consistency was a consolation; "so long as the men who used her were white her prestige among her fellows remained unimpaired" (pp. 68-69). Cloete thereby emphasises the fact that the phenomenon of interracial sexual relations between whites and non-whites predated the Great Trek, a fact which in the 1930s hardly needed to be underscored, at least in South Africa if not in the United Kingdom or the United States

of America, where *Turning Wheels* was published. Precisely how the young De Kok who rides along on the Great Trek reacts to his status as a man with infirm familial roots does not fully emerge in the narrative. Cloete states, however, that this Coloured man had taken the initiative to the prefix "de" to his surname "in imitation of the names of some families of Boers who were descended from the Huguenots" (p. 69).

De Kok gradually emerges as a talented hunter and ultimately faithful companion to Piete du Plessis, but his chief personality trait is dishonesty. When he and Sara du Plessis follow her brother, De Kok finds joy in his plan to mislead him with a grandiose tale of how he and Sara had narrowly escaped with their lives when a Zulu *impi* had destroyed a Voortrekker commando: "Ach, how he would lie. He smiled as he thought of his skill in lying". Yet De Kok is not confident about his prospects of pulling the wool over his master's eyes: "Unfortunately Zwart Piete knew what a good liar he was . . ." (p. 115). Nevertheless, he lies through his teeth when the two men are reunited. His histrionic approach mirrors stereotypical representations of the Coloureds' supposed flair for the theatrical. After wiping the tears from his eyes, De Kok proclaims to Piete the obliteration of the entire commando. Accentuating the magnitude of the fabricated catastrophe, "he rose and made a sweeping, dramatic gesture" while reporting how their guns had turned red hot in their hands, thousands of people had fallen, and blood flown copiously during the futile effort to stave off the Zulu assault (p. 141). On the other hand, De Kok later proves himself to be a loyal servant to Piete du Plessis as well as a talented hunter in his own right. In the absence of other male Coloured people amongst the Voortrekkers, Cloete's bizarre image of De Kok is left virtually unchallenged, apart from the challenge which his own preposterousness poses to his credibility. In any case, the portrait of De Kok which emerges in *Turning Wheels* does little more than to reproduce with a generous portion of humour much of the long-standing stereotype of the Coloureds.

Jakalaas: An African Sancho Panza

One of Cloete's most colourful characters is ethnically one of his most enigmatic. In the third section of Chapter One he introduces Jakalaas as an "old slave" of the Van Reenen family (p. 4). Apart from this rudimentary identification, however, this loyal servant's background remains murky during the first half of *Turning Wheels*. Given the presence of Malay, Khoisan, black African, and other kinds of slaves at the Cape, it is therefore impossible to ascertain from what kind of

ancestry Jakalaas has sprung until Cloete identifies him as a "Kaffir" (p. 284), and even this is obviously oblique. Uninhibited by this ambiguity, however, Cloete sets about to create a distinct personality for him which bears some resemblance to that of Don Quixote's worldly squire and foil, Sancho Panza. Whether Cloete ever read Cervantes' fiction and consciously used that pudgy Spaniard as a model for Jakalaas is questionable, but the parallel is nevertheless enlightening, notwithstanding the absence of any quixotic idealist from *Turning Wheels*. His desires are uncomplicated and address the gratification of his fundamental needs. "It was good to find honey", muses Jakalaas. "To follow a honey bird and eat it from the comb, to eat it, grubs and all, with the bird fluttering anxiously about him while it waited for its share" (p. 4). In Chapter Four he is still a man living primarily for the fulfilment of his basic needs and finding contentedness therein. Thinking retrospectively of life on a farm in the Cape, "Jakalaas took snuff and squatted, dreaming happily of cattle. He had eaten, and his belly and his heart were full" (p. 51).

Cloete's characterisation of this slave is neither one-dimensional nor simplistically condescending, however. To be sure, Jakalaas evinces some of the immaturity on which theoreticians of colonial discourse have concentrated their attention as a factor which European writers supposedly have used as an excuse for justifying imperial control of subjugated peoples. Yet other qualities contradict this. Jakalaas gradually emerges as an essentially decent but cowed individual whose behaviour serves as a foil for that of some of the Voortrekkers. He is a gifted woodworker whose invaluable skills include repairing wagons and who has a great appreciation of livestock (p. 49). Both of these attributes, of course, reflect values which were central to the prevailing image of white Voortrekkers. Yet he remains subservient to a great degree. Graphically illustrating this state, when Piete du Plessis is about to flee with Sannie, Jakalaas emerges from the shadows to pay homage to him. Cloete's words testify unambiguously to his servile behaviour: "The old Kaffir clapped his hands together and knelt on the ground before the young man" (p. 284). The generally irenic personality of Jakalaas does not prevent him from hating the virulently anti-black Hendrik van der Berg "with a deep and bitter hatred", not least because this Voortrekker leader is "a hard and cruel master" and also an "unjust" one (p. 335). Jakalaas does not let this animosity extend to the settlers in general, and in fact he seeks to warn them that an attack on Canaan is imminent. He complains to Piete du Plessis that "they will not listen to me because my skin is black" and wonders whether there "is no wisdom in a white man till his sap is dry, or in an old one if he be a Kaffir?" (p. 280). Again, with these words Cloete seeks to avoid a Manichaean racial dualism in which the forces of evil face off against those of virtue along ethnic lines. That

simplistic depiction had long been a characteristic of the myth of the heroic Voortrekkers, and apparently Cloete refused to buy it.

Otto von Rhule: A Stereotypical Prussian Militarist as Voortrekker

Cloete adds yet another vital ethnic dimension to his gallery of male European characters, one with unmistakable contemporary overtones, in his creation of a former Prussian military officer who accompanies the Voortrekkers. Otto von Rhule is not a particularly well developed player on the stage of the Great Trek, and indeed his demeanour is partly stereotypical. Cloete's often fertile imagination has not served him well in drawing this German expatriate. Nevertheless, von Rhule is briefly significant both because he mirrors certain characteristics of the Voortrekkers while serving as a foil for others.

Von Rhule enters the plot indirectly in the sixth and final section of Chapter Two, *i.e.* after the Van der Berg wagon train is attacked and the sobered survivors are contemplating the their future defence. They have brought along a cannon in the hope that it would serve them well in defending a fixed laager if notice of an impending attack were sufficient to employ such a weapon. Under the circumstances, "Von Rhule, the German, must be told to deal with it", not because of his ethnic identity, but because "he was a soldier and understood such matters" (p. 26). This military man does not appear at this point, however, and no mention is made of him until he Cloete tells somewhat more about him in Chapter Sixteen, when Canaan has been established but tokens of its eventual demise are already apparent. Von Rhule's conduct is one indicator that beneath the surface of initial prosperity in the settlement there is a cleft between ideals and reality. In his description of the man, voiced through Sannie's thoughts, Cloete emphasises his military demeanour. Hendrik van der Berg's young wife mistrusts him as a steely man with "cold grey eyes" and who "instead of slouching, walked erect, his legs moving as if he wore spurs on his heels, who rode his horse as if he were frozen into the saddle". His professional personality, in brief, has accompanied this erstwhile cavalry man "who had fled to Africa, the land of opportunity", where he has gained influence over "simple Boers" through "the power of his memory and the swiftness of his hand to strike". Cloete uses von Rhule at this point to fire another general volley at the Voortrekkers by stating that this German had won respect because of his "wide knowledge[,] which was only wide when compared to the ignorance of those he taught". His pupils, we learn, are the youth of Canaan, to whom he imparts the rudiments of

literacy in a reed hut. Part of the curriculum is apparently Biblical, but this component only underscores the gap between him and many of the other male characters. Von Rhule "recited whole chapters of the Bible cynically indifferent to their spirit, pedantically accurate as to their letter" (pp. 227-228).

This officer-turned-teacher can be seen as just as much a German of the 1930s as of the 1830s. By 1936, when Cloete was writing *Turning Wheels*, the infamous "Nürnberg laws", which formed part of the basis of severe discrimination against Jews in the Third Reich, had been promulgated, and both they and the broad tradition of Nazi anti-Semitism were well-known in both Britain and South Africa. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that von Rhule, as a transparent symbol of stonehearted German military might, is at odds with Isaak Rosenstein, an itinerant pedlar who visits Canaan, even going so far as to call him "a Jewish swine". Convinced of his understanding of this ethnic group, von Rhule believes that if he "did not know the Jews then no one knew them", and his detestation of them leads him to ponder ridding the settlement of Rosenstein. Why should he and the other settlers have to purchase the itinerant merchant's goods, the German wonders, "when a shot or a blow would have given them all for nothing" (pp. 233-234).

Von Rhule is not merely hateful but also egotistically amoral. Like several other Voortrekkers, he eventually desires a sexual relationship with Sannie, notwithstanding her initial rejection of him. Yet his thoughts about her vary greatly from those of Hendrik, and by contrast make that self-styled patriarch's religious libido stand out in even bolder relief. The German, Cloete explains, did not particularly want Sannie. Instead, "his actions were due to boredom and the fact that in courting the wife of Hendrik van der Berg he courted danger". Unlike the agriculturally inclined Boers of the Great Trek, "he alone was a man brought up to war, and the excitements of the trade learnt in his youth left him contemptuous of the occupations of peace". This adventurism is linked to sexual exploitation: "One day, when he grew tired of her, he would ride away. He had done it before, he would do it again" (p. 239). Von Rhule's thinking about Sannie thus differs markedly from that of Hendrik van der Berg, who at least has convinced himself that his lust is driven by God. Of the divine, von Rhule apparently has no personal consciousness. Cloete, in fact, declares as much in describing his unexpected conquest of his youthful victim: "Cynical and irreligious[,] he charmed and frightened Sannie by a cold sanity which at first she took for madness, later as blasphemy, and finally accepted as an unacknowledged bond between them" (p. 250). A final difference separating von Rhule from most of the other Voortrekkers lies in his attitude towards his adopted home. Unlike his fellow migrants, this German

immigrant eventually thinks nostalgically of his homeland, "and cursed Africa and the stupidities which had brought him here" (p. 271).

Isaak Rosenstein

Cloete is not known to have been particularly anti-Semitic, but his perceptions of Jews and other ethnic groups were formed in both South Africa and the United Kingdom during a period when rhetorical attacks on Jews occurred frequently in the media of both countries. This was particularly the case in the Union of South Africa during the economically prime ministership of Barry Hertzog and was closely linked to political efforts to curb Jewish immigration from Hitler's Third Reich and other European countries. The intermittent stream of Jews into the Union during the years preceding the ascent of the National Socialists to power in Germany increased notably after 1933, particularly after the Nürnberg Laws excluded many of them from civil service positions, medical practice, and other forms of gainful employment. In that year, only 745 landed on South African shores, but by 1936 this had more than quadruped to 3330. Their arrival, especially that of more than 600 on the ship *Stuttgart* late in the year, alarmed many whites, especially in the Hertzog-Smuts Fusion Government, who protested against the alleged inability of these newcomers to assimilate in what they regarded as their Christian country. A crescendo of clamouring in the media for tightened restrictions on immigration soon lead to the passing of the Aliens Act of 1937, which replaced the Immigration Quota Act of 1930 and empowered the Immigrants' Selection Board to admit or reject applicants for permanent residence on the basis of "assimilability" without defining that term. Afrikaners reacted variously to anti-Semitic agitation. This was apparent in the Dutch Reformed Church, the spiritual home of many of the South Africans who were calling for a total ban on Jewish immigration. As Gustav Saron has pointed out, in 1933 the weekly organ of that denomination, *Die Kerkbode*, severely criticised anti-Semitic diatribes. By 1937, however, the Transvaal Provincial Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, while claiming to distance itself from persecution of any sort, declared that "where anti-Jewish movements are launched for economic or other reasons, the Synod wishes to leave it to the Christian conscience of its members to decide how far such movements are justified or not".[15] To the Purified Nationalists of D.F. Malan and his cohort, anti-Semitism provided an issue which struck a chord with many Afrikaners in economically constricted straits. When Hendrik Verwoerd left his professorship at the University of Stellenbosch to become the first editor of

the Nationalist organ in Johannesburg, *Die Transvaler*, he brought unmistakably anti-Semitic attitudes to the pages of that newspaper. Indeed, the first issue carried his article of several thousand words titled "Die Joodse Vraagstuk Besien vanuit Die Nasionale Standpunt". Insisting that the National Party was neither anti-Semitic nor anti-English but merely pro-Afrikaner, this erstwhile sociologist and psychologist used more than one full page to explain that Afrikaans attitudes towards Jews must be seen against the backdrop of the present economic recession and the desire of Afrikaners for upward social and professional mobility. "In hierdie atmosfeer en onder dié vreemde base moes Afrikaanse seuns en dogters hul heenkome in die handel en nywerheid vind", Verwoerd declared. "Dikwels moes hul ontek dat Joodse eienaars die vernaamste betrekkings aan rasgenote gegee het of weens verwantskap en rasverband, of omdat hulle meer vertroue in hul besigheidsbekwaamheid gehad het". South African Jews were consequently at odds with Afrikaners: "Hierdie bevolkingsgrope, wat homself steeds binne die bevolking afsonder as 'n aparte eenheid, en wat taamlik onverskillig of selfs vyandig staan teenoor die nasionale aspirasies van die Afrikanerdom is dus gesien as die grooep wat ook die Afrikaner se economiese velvaart in die weg staan".[16] The specifically Jewish element in Cloete's imaginative reconstruction of the Great Trek should be read against the backdrop of National Party agitation against the immigration of further Jews into the Union of South Africa.

The Jewish trader who calls at Canaan to peddle his wares is another purely stereotypical character who contributes relatively little to *Turning Wheels* ideationally or otherwise but probably reveals something of Cloete's incorporation of anti-Semitic prejudices during an era when deprecating images of Jews were rampant in South Africa and Europe. Isaak Rosenstein has trekked north in the dust of the pioneers, "following his hooked nose into the depths of the country where men would need powder from the little barrels he had loaded on to the backs of his donkeys and the women materials for clothes, sewing-cotton, and needles", in Cloete's condescending and unimaginative description (p. 232). Not only his physiognomy, but also his advent in Canaan is portrayed in terms of crass ethnic oversimplification: "The Jew came, as such traders always came, arriving with his ragged bushmen servants out of the emptiness of the veld" (p. 232). Cloete acknowledges the economically significant rôle of these men in performing a sorely needed service in the remote northern regions, however, namely purveying sorely needed commercial goods which would otherwise be unavailable. Rosenstein's sales rhetoric is an amalgam of flattery intended to manipulate the self-images of Voortrekker women and accolades for his merchandise. That he is a crafty businessman Cloete does not leave in doubt. Much of his success in the retail trade is supposedly rooted in his ethnicity: "With the skill of his race in these matters he assessed

every one and everything with which he came in contact as he made his visits" (p. 236). Yet despite his critical view of the Voortrekkers, Rosenstein must admit that in the penurious Voortrekkers he has almost met his match: "Never in the course of all his travels had he met such hard, close traders, a people who were so slim. Before God he believed that they had all conspired to verneuk him" (p. 234). His profits from dealing in Canaan thus fall far short of his expectations, but Rosenstein nevertheless leaves Canaan with his opinion of the inner regions of the continent intact: "Africa to him was a fat cow, and if one had the skill and courage, ready to be milked" (p. 237). Despite his many differences from the Voortrekkers, this itinerant businessman shares with his Voortrekkers a willingness to exploit the interior of the continent for his own ends. It hardly needs to be explained that commercial exploitation of Africa is a phenomenon which respects few if any ethnic or religious limits in *Turning Wheels*, as Islamic slavers also play a prominent rôle in Cloete's reconstruction of the rape of the continent.

Arabic Foils

Cloete may have included his description of the confrontation of Piete du Plessis and his entourage with Arabic slave traders and their human booty in Portuguese East Africa chiefly to add another dash of latter-day Victorian romanticism to the central flow of the plot. The excursion to Delagoa Bay is, after all, a digression from the sometimes plodding narrative of the Voortrekkers, a diversion rich in sensationalism and poor in plausibility. Whatever the literary demerits of this episode may be, however, it gives Cloete an opportunity to illuminate further certain characteristics of the Voortrekkers' relations with black Africans and their religious beliefs by tacitly underscoring approximate parallels in those of Islamic exploiters of the indigenous population.

Du Plessis and his companions observe that these people, like their friends and relatives from the Cape, are on a trek, albeit one of a much different character and destination. Moreover, under Arabic hegemony there has miscegenation with the Africans. The elderly paramount slaver, Hussien (*sic*) Zeid, is protected by a mobile, ethnically diverse bodyguard, "a wild[,] heterogeneous crowd of savage fighting men" who include "Arabs, bastard Arabs and big negroes from the north . . ." (p. 211). In what language communication between the two parties is attempted Cloete does not disclose. In any case, it appears to have been limited by the cultural and religious rigidity of the Islamic party. When Piete du Plessis addresses the ageing Arab, the latter initially replies

bluntly with a Koranic citation no less stereotypical than many of the religious utterances of the migrating Boers: "There is no God but God" (p. 212), a tenet which he repeats shortly after the two manage to engage in a conversation (p. 215). Fatalism governs much of his thinking; after trading sixty-seven slaves for some of Du Plessis' cattle, he assures his European guests that "those beasts will take us some way through this desolate country, and later, no doubt, if Allah wills, we shall come upon other beasts" (p. 189). This is reminiscent, *mutatis mutandis*, of Anna de Jong's many fatalistic utterances. Furthermore, the rôle of divine will in determining the behaviour of the adherents of Islam in the wilderness of Portuguese East Africa is described in terms which suggest a parallel with Dutch Reformed certitude as a motivating and sustaining factor on the trek to the Transvaal. The former region, Cloete relates in words which could apply to the Voortrekkers with only minor adjustments, featured a "lack of food, of water, and the intolerable heat, all contributing to a loss of human life which the Arabs had come to consider as all but inevitable, and seeing in it the will of Allah, they pressed forward, relentlessly and uncomplaining" (p. 216).

One of the most striking aspects of these comparisons is the inability of the Du Plessis siblings to see in the Arabic slavers any reflection of their behaviour *vis-à-vis* black Africans. When introducing that young brother and sister, Cloete emphasises, as we have noted, their love of killing "Kaffirs". But physical abuse of captives they cannot tolerate: "Even Zwart Piete and Sara, accustomed as they were to cruelties, were revolted by the inhuman behaviour of the slave drivers". They find it virtually incredible that when administering floggings the Arabs would remain "unmoved" by the suffering they were inflicting. The Du Plessises believe that "to beat a Kaffir in anger, one who had lost a cow, was one thing, to do this was another" (p. 216). Cloete thereby indirectly underscores how he believed that participants in the Great Trek remained blind to the excesses of their own racist conduct, which includes virtual genocide in the interest of the white ethnic security, but could be censorious about others' inhumane treatment of indigenes. His emphasising of such conduct across religious lines meshes well with his weakly spiritual identity as a man to whom specific doctrines meant very little but who accepted certain general moral tenets which he apparently believed were operative irrespective of religious differences.

Elements of Contemporary Political Relevance?

It cannot be overemphasised that Cloete was by no means a historian but was compelled to rely on Walker's *The Great Trek* for his basic information about this phenomenon. From his many years in the Transvaal, he knew far more about the South Africa of the 1930s than that of the 1830s. This appears to have left its mark on *Turning Wheels*, where in places Cloete seems to have been attempting *inter alia* to issue warnings about the potentially dire consequences of the perennial failure to relieve racial tensions.

It is striking how several authorial comments about the Canaan settlement can be read as observations about South Africa in the 1930s. After that virginal area has been transformed into a vast patchwork of farms, milk and honey flow in abundance. Yet this is not the Promised Land nearly free of tribulation, as some Voortrekkers - and, more so, their subsequent interpreters - want to believe. Cloete emphasises that "God who had led them so far was chastening them, giving with one hand and taking away with the other, piling favours and disasters upon them impartially". Indeed, presaging what were widely regarded as general white attitudes in the Union of South Africa, not least with regard to the issue of which ethnic groups would perform physical labour, prosperity brought leisure, and "with the ease came sloth, her handmaiden, and with a surfeit the despondency of valueless achievement" (pp. 245-246). The appearance of facile prosperity in "a rich fat land, a land where nothing that had been asked for, or prayed for, was refused them", veiled debilitating social flaws. Cloete mixes metaphors in grasping for pungent expressions of this contradiction: "So beneath its fair exterior the fruit was rotten and the men's blood black with desires they did not understand and fears which they refused to express" (p. 246). Subsequently, Cloete reverses his position and refers to the "air of fictitious prosperity about the settlement", suggesting either that economic conditions have deteriorated at Canaan during the early 1840s (as indeed they fluctuated during the turbulent 1920s and 1930s in the Union of South Africa generally) or that the previously assumed prosperity was illusory. This, too, could arguably be said of South Africa at the time when Cloete was writing *Turning Wheels*, not least with regard to the grotesquely inconsistent distribution of wealth which left most non-whites and large numbers of "poor whites" outside the pale. Zwart Piete's assessment of widespread black resentment and the threat to Canaan and the surrounding region is similarly applicable to the interwar period when Cloete was residing in the Transvaal: "'Why should they like you?' Piete asked. 'Are you not worse than Zulus who come like a storm, destroy, and then go perhaps

never to come again? Whereas you come and take their best grazing, kill the game on which they live, and expect them to love you. It does not make sense', he added". Du Plessis holds no brief for the Biblicistic arguments of fellow Voortrekkers, which echoed a century later, that the indigenous population were "children of Ham" and should therefore passively accept servile status. He reminds settlers that the blacks simply know nothing of the Pentateuchal text to which allusion was being made; on the contrary, "they think they are the people who have been dispossessed, and they are angry. You can see anger in their eyes" (pp. 278-279). He adds that the Voortrekkers would do well finally to become acquainted with the indigenes in their midst, words which twentieth-century social reformers uttered incessantly, if only in the interest of self-preservation (p. 279). It is in this context that Jakalaas, the representative black African in Canaan, laments that his efforts to warn the settlers that an attack might be imminent have fallen on deaf ears. He attributes this to the colour of his skin (p. 280). Cloete subsequently cites complacency bolstered by Biblical imagery. Hendrik van der Berg tills his fields assured that God has given him skill, power, and "capacity for righteous anger". Furthermore, he attributes to God the timely "blessed rain" which allows seeds to germinate. In terms of race relations, Van der Berg is certain that God has pacified the original (black) Canaanites, forcing them to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks (p. 310). The grand South African illusion of eternal white rule, bringing security for the dominant ethnic group, reigns supreme. It seems plausible that Cloete believed that in the Union of South Africa of the 1930s, when the challenges of the dispossessed across much of the racial spectrum, were heard frequently, the possibility of massive civil unrest had to be taken more seriously than many South Africans were willing to do.

The Genesis of the Heroic Myth

Cloete presents much about the bravery of the Voortrekkers that harmonises with the heroic image which was firmly in place in Afrikaans circles before he chose to become a novelist. He also briefly addresses the origins of the general myth of the heroic Voortrekkers at an early stage. It was not merely the creation of subsequent historians and other commentators, but had its roots partly in the rhetoric of the historic Voortrekkers themselves. After the first ambush of the Van der Berg trek, the survivors, together with counterparts in the Paul Pieters trek, discuss assembling a commando to pursue and destroy the raiders. They compile an oral list of men

with Dutch, German, and French names as possible participants: "So it went on, name after name being called out, some without further comment, others with stories of their hunting or fighting exploits attached to them". But the discourse is unreliable and consciously tendentious to magnify the attributes of the militants: "Anecdotes were told, nicknames explained, physical peculiarities described. Men killed in earlier skirmishes or who had died were lamented, their qualities being exaggerated and their defects charitably minimised" (pp. 42-43). This segment reads almost like a microcosm of the early twentieth-century creation of the heroic myth by Preller and other Afrikaner nationalists. Cloete appears to have believed that their cultivated image of the Voortrekkers was not fully novel, however, but had germinated on the frontier more than half a century earlier. Nowhere in *Turning Wheels*, though, does Cloete comment on the subsequent embellishment of this germ of the myth or mention how early twentieth-century Afrikaners nurtured its evolution. It is a loose thread in the often carelessly woven warp and woof of his narrative.

Notes

1. Edwin Hees, "The Voortrekkers on Film: From Preller to Pornography", *Critical Arts*, X, no. 1 (1996), p. 16.

2. J.G. Romer, "Notes on the Cloete Family", *Familia*, I (1964), p. 63.

3. Stuart Cloete, *The Gambler* (London: Collins, 1973), pp. 90-93.

4. Cloete, *The Gambler*, pp. 92ff.

5. Cloete, *The Gambler*, p. 166.

6. Cloete, *The Gambler*, pp. 167-174.

7. Jessica Brett Young, *Francis Brett Young: A Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1962), pp. 229-230.

8. Cloete, *The Gambler*, pp. 175-191.

9. Stuart Cloete, *A Victorian Son* (New York: The John Day Company, 1972), pp. 259-261.

10. Stuart Cloete, "I Speak for the African", *Life* (international edition), XIV, no. 12 (15 June 1953), pp. 52-59.

11. Stuart Cloete, *South Africa: The Land, Its People and Achievements* (Johannesburg: Da Gama Publishers, n.d.), pp. 5-6.

12. Cloete, *South Africa: The Land, Its People and Achievements*, pp. 59-60.

13. See, for example, the derogatory treatment of Deborah Krillet's aunts in *The Shulamite* and the analysis of this and other signs in Frederick Hale, "Constructing the Primal Boer Image in Alice and Claude Askew's *The Shulamite*", *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, LIII, no.4 (June 1999), pp.115-128.

14. V.A. February, *Mind your colour: The 'coloured' stereotype in South African literature* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1971), p. 65.

15. Gustav Saron, "Epilogue, 1910-1955", in Gustav Saron and Louis Hotz (eds.), *The Jews in South Africa. A History* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 376-380, 384.

16. H.F. Verwoerd, "Die Joodse Vraagstuk Besien vanuit Die Nasionale Standpunt", *Die Transvaler* (Johannesburg), 1 October 1937, pp. 32, 22.

Chapter X

The Controversy over *Turning Wheels*

Given the severity of Cloete's characterisation of many Voortrekkers as violent, lustful, and racist, and particularly his highlighting Hendrik van der Berg's egotistical religious obsessions and willingness to murder his own son in order to satisfy his sexual desires, it was inevitable that many Afrikaners would find *Turning Wheels* singularly offensive. Moreover, the publication of Cloete's first novel on the eve of the centenary of the Great Trek undoubtedly appeared provocative to descendants of the Voortrekkers who had accepted and were seeking to promote a heroic image of these pioneers. In addition to criticisms of artistic weaknesses as well as historical and linguistic errors in the text, these two underlying factors go far towards explaining the hostility of many Afrikaans reviewers and journalists to *Turning Wheels* and the subsequent public controversy over this novel. Nevertheless, outside Afrikaans circles there was a quiet before the storm, a period when many Anglophone critics read and commented with equanimity of Cloete's fictional reconstruction of the Great Trek. In the present chapter we shall consider both favourable reactions to *Turning Wheels* and infuriated attacks on it as well as ramifications of the dispute for such matters as banning the importation of the book and challenges to its inclusion in the collections of public libraries.

An International Spectrum of Favourable Reviews

It cannot be overemphasised that *Turning Wheels* received generally favourable and in some cases enthusiastic reviews in the British, North American, and South African English press. A representative sample of critical comments will underscore how reviewers on the intercontinental scene of English literary criticism perceived what some believed was Cloete's initial venture into the arena of fiction. No less significantly, of course, reading their critiques of this novel reveals how they viewed both the text and the historical events which it describes as ostensibly disinterested, external observers (although their own prejudices are sometimes apparent), whereas the descendants of the Voortrekkers would perceive *Turning Wheels* from a vastly more emotionally engaged perspective. Less apparent in such a survey are the issues which they overlooked but which came

to the fore when Afrikaans counterparts read and reacted with considerable hostility - or even rage - to this book.

One of the first reviews of *Turning Wheels* to be published in England was among the most reserved. An anonymous critic in *The Times Literary Supplement* thought the text particularly graphic and believed that "the greatest merit of the book is its evocation of a sense of space, of broad country through which the wagons lumber uncomfortably" towards an uncertain but surely distant goal. Cloete's penchant for description on a grand scale, however, had infected his creation of characters. Hence, "the encounters with natives, the first view of the promised settlement and the lonely hunting journeys are freshly and even heroically rendered, but the people themselves are afflicted by a convention that sometimes falls like a blight upon the heroic novel". Under Cloete's magnifying glass, "Loves are bigger and lustier, hates more deadly and revenge irresistibly sweeter than we are accustomed to in ordinary men and women . . .". This reviewer believed the characters thus varied considerably in their credibility and concluded that Tante Anna de Jong deserved the highest marks of the lot. He nevertheless recommended *Turning Wheels* as a "readable and sometimes exciting" work by a "promising" novelist.[1]

More enthusiastic in his appraisal of Cloete's first published book was Wilfrid Gibson of *The Manchester Guardian*, who judged it "a novel of distinction". He particularly praised the "vitally conceived and vividly realised characters", especially Anna de Jong and Rinkals as the showpieces of a large gallery from "Cloete's fertile imagination". Gibson believed the Afrikaners of the Great Trek emerged as "savage and insensitive souls", at least when assessed with the touchstone of pre-war British standards, but he also perceived "the true quality of heroic beauty in the unquestioning and unconscious courage with which they faced the most outrageous odds".[2]

Across the Atlantic, where Houghton Mifflin Company published *Turning Wheels*, it also received enthusiastic reviews. Writing in *The New York Times*, for instance, Ralph Thompson lauded it particularly for Cloete's "brilliant description" of the South African panorama and life on the Great Trek. He also praised what he regarded as the historicity of the narrative, questionably attributing this to the fact that Cloete was "of Boer descent" and had spent many years in South Africa. *Turning Wheels* thus impressed Thompson with "the quality of the historical material"; indeed, he characterised it as "basically history, with but [*sic*] enough novelistic veneer to serve the purposes of fiction". Regarding Cloete's general characterisation of the Afrikaners during the 1830s, Thompson believed that the author may have been too generous: "He doesn't picture the Boers as oppressors of native tribesmen, which they certainly were (and which, according to one point of view, they still are), nor does he go into the political consequences

that followed the setting-up of a republican State on the borders of an English colony". Thompson does not appear to have considered the eventuality that the descendants of the Voortrekkers would resent Cloete's representation of their forebears. He allowed that "certain types of people" would not like *Turning Wheels*, but in this regard he mentioned only "deadly-in-earnest" readers who had no tolerance for writing in a romantic vein and "delicate ones" who could not stomach the goriest scenes.[3]

Another reviewer in New York, Jane Spence Southron, who had spent six years in the Union of South Africa, shared some of Thompson's views of *Turning Wheels* but differed from his perception of it as essentially historical fiction. Whereas Francis Brett Young had recently written a "fictional complement of Professor Walker's history of the Great Trek", Cloete's work was to her mind "not a fictional history of the Dutch migration . . . but a powerful tragedy deriving its force and impulse from a unique tribal-national movement". Nevertheless, Southron lauded Cloete's supposed precision in portraying the land of the Great Trek. Calling attention to his years as a farmer there, she declared that "he shows us South Africa neither as a poet nor an enthusiast, but as a skillful surgeon wielding the scalpel or a botanist using the microscope". Moreover, despite her insistence that *Turning Wheels* was not historical fiction, Southron believed that Cloete had engaged in historical interpretation by implicitly commenting on the etiology of the Great Trek. In what appears to be an oversight of key passages in the novel, she thought that to Cloete "the spirit impelling them [*i.e.* the Voortrekkers] was essentially the same as that which sent [Dutch-American President] Theodore Roosevelt big-game hunting and Amelia Earhart sky-questing".[4]

Most of the major South African daily newspapers in English carried reviews of *Turning Wheels* in October and November 1937. A reviewer identified only as "L.S." in *The Rand Daily Mail* praised Cloete for imaginatively venturing further into the realm of the Great Trek than historians had been able to proceed. Not mincing words, he was convinced that *Turning Wheels* should not only be heralded as a bold new novel but also "all the more welcome when you realise somewhere about the fourth or fifth chapter that this is a brilliant piece of work". L.S., like several other reviewers, thought Cloete was uniquely situated to write an English novel about the Great Trek. He acknowledged that Cloete had ancestral roots at the Cape of Good Hope and had farmed in the Transvaal for several years after the conclusion of the Great War. "These bold facts disclose that he probably had first-hand information of the life of the Voortrekkers", L.S. reasoned optimistically, "that he knew the people both by kinship and from having dwelt among their descendants; and that he had lived on the land and was in close touch with nature and

the soil". This reviewer thought one of the greatest assets of *Turning Wheels* lay in Cloete's development of his unique gallery of characters and cited Hendrik van der Berg, Tante Anna de Jong and Sara du Plessis as illustrative evidence. With no mean understatement, L.S. declared in relation to these highly diverse Voortrekkers that Cloete had "not idealised his material" and that "therein lies the great strength of his work". Similarly understated is L.S.'s acknowledgement that "on one or two details one may quarrel with Mr. Cloete". He cited the "unnecessarily pitiless" destruction of the Canaan settlement, the "annoying" punctuation, and the "shockingly bad" spelling of many Afrikaans words but dismissed these flaws as "slight blemishes on a grand tale". L.S. did not broach the possibility of divergent perceptions from the viewpoints of non-English ethnic groups or indicate that he believed there was anything controversial about *Turning Wheels*.[5]

Turning Wheels immediately proved popular amongst English speakers in Natal as well as in certain other regions of the Union of South Africa. Appealing almost exclusively to an Anglophone white readership in Durban, an unnamed reviewer in *The Natal Mercury* agreed with several counterparts elsewhere that Cloete's pedigree had proven invaluable in constructing the Great Trek and insisted that "only one who has a blood-link with those old pioneers, or who has been in intimate personal touch with their descendants could so clearly portray the fierce individualism of the Dutch settler that even to-day is a marked characteristic of South African national life and is so little understood by the outsider". *Turning Wheels* bore the "authentic stamp of personal experience of the life of the country and its people". He predicted that this novel would prove to be a book "whose success can be put down mainly to the pride that every South African will experience in its reading--a proud realisation that this really is the country and these really are the people".[6] Rarely has a reviewer shot wider of the mark in speculating about the reception of a book.

The most prescient comments about *Turning Wheels* probably flowed from the pen of David Gamble, who reviewed it in *The Cape Argus* on 27 October. This critic left no doubt about his respect for Cloete's artistic endowment as an emerging novelist and his belief that he had read the work of an author uniquely placed to carry out his task. "He has written a powerful and creative novel which could only have been written of South Africa and by a South African or by a *deracine* of genius", Gamble averred. "Stuart Cloete appears to be both". Owing to his singular status as simultaneously an insider and an outsider, Cloete had ostensibly been able to write with full sincerity and knowledge of his subject while satisfying the demands of readers overseas. This, Gamble believed, set him apart from previous authors whom he explicitly declined to name but who in all probability included contemporary *littérateurs* like Sarah Gertrude Millin,

who had "written of South Africa with one eye on the country and the other carefully focused on the English and American markets". The result in Cloete's case was "the first really profound study, in English, of modern South Africa in its period and process of formation at the time of the Great Trek of 1836". Gamble safely predicted that *Turning Wheels* would stir up a hornet's nest amongst Afrikaners: "His book is going to upset a great many people who have been brought up to regard the Voortrekkers, not as very human fellows endowed with unusual courage and resourcefulness as pioneers, but as the hallowed ones of the nation, members of a sort of national Valhalla, away and beyond contemporary criticism". Turning to racial matters, Afrikaners, he prophesied, "are going to resent all sorts of implications and downright assertions with which the novel is littered, passages such as those which concern the relations between the leader of the trek and Louisa[,] the coloured girl whose skin 'was the colour and had the texture of a magnolia flower'". Gamble did not accurately foresee all aspects of the subsequent dispute. Writing at a time of heightened anti-Semitism which had led to the passing of the Aliens Act earlier that year, he believed, for instance, that Cloete's denigrating portrait of Isaak Rosenstein, the Jewish pedlar who visits Canaan and other settlements in the Transvaal, as an economic parasite, would evoke "a certain amount of protest", but this does not appear to have developed, notwithstanding the magnitude of the public debate over Jewish immigration and assimilability which had prompted the passing of the Aliens Act in 1937. If it did, it was thoroughly overshadowed by the strife over the portrayal of the Voortrekkers themselves. Furthermore, Gamble was so impressed by what he regarded as Cloete's artistic achievement that he predicted that not even Afrikaans "critics will be able to deny the power and urgency of the whole conception and the way in which it is carried out".[7]

While the response of the South African English press to *Turning Wheels* was overwhelmingly positive, there were a few dissenting voices in that quarter from the outset. *The Cape Times* published two contradictory reactions to the novel on 30 October 1937. Critic Howard Spring lauded Cloete's zestful writing, which he thought reached its zenith in the description of the final battle. He also praised the "most lively quality" of the narrative, especially the violent interaction of the Voortrekkers with Zulus and animals alike. The result of all this, Spring concluded, was "a robust Old Testament sort of story, full of fierce flavours, harsh happenings, much calling upon God, and fighting, and begetting of offspring by man and beast".[8] Two columns to the right on the same page, a detractor identified only by the initials "R.H." took exception to much of this and to the chorus of praise he had heard from critics overseas, claiming that *Turning Wheels* "is not truly South African and, in many ways, it is not good". He pointed out that Cloete was

a Parisian by birth who had fought for the British in the Great War and insisted that "much of his South African background is bogus", presumably because of his composite ethnic and cultural heritage. Foreshadowing one dimension of the subsequent controversy, the amalgam of English and imperfect Afrikaans in the text particularly irked R.H. He allowed that Cloete had undertaken an epic task but thought it had remained unfulfilled and suggested that Cloete's alien background simply left him unequipped to deal adequately with a chiefly Afrikaans topic: "The gap between intention and achievement in this book is the gap between Paris and Parys".[9]

An anonymous reviewer in *The Star* expressed a partially similar opinion, calling *Turning Wheels* a "remarkable novel" of "singular power" but generalised that Cloete's characters "often talk like minor prophets, invariably beginning their oracular deliverances with the word 'Ja.' Often they speak out of character, revealing a sophistication of thought at odds with their environment and origin". This critic also took to task Cloete's attempts to construct the past, declaring that *Turning Wheels* "is not an historical novel" but a work of fiction "full of bad history" which "cannot be accepted as a portrait gallery of Voortrekkers". He predicted that many South Africans would "reject it with indignation".[10]

The Origins of the Afrikaans Protest

The Afrikaans press had virtually nothing to say about *Turning Wheels* until Albertus L. Geyer (1894-1969), the editor of *Die Burger*, which had been launched in Cape Town in 1915 as the first daily newspaper in Afrikaans, took up the cudgels. An ardent member of the National Party and a friend of D.F. Malan, this historian and journalist had in the early 1930s staunchly opposed co-operation with the South African Party of Jan Smuts. On 24 November, Geyer published an editorial titled "'n Nare Boek" in which he declared that Cloete's recent volume was a book "wat verontwaardiging sal wek onder almal wat die Voortrekkers eer". Asserting that Afrikaners in general were patient people, he thought it unnecessary to show endless patience in tolerating a portrayal of the Voortrekkers which was "'n belediging vir die Afrikaner-volk". Recalling that only a few years earlier protests had led to the banning of Lamont's *War, Wine and Women*, Geyer demanded that similarly short shrift be made of *Turning Wheels* on a national basis. This irate editor thought that time was at a premium in this regard, as from his ethnic perspective the national honour was supposedly at stake: "Die volk van Suid-Afrika sou homself 'n oneer aandoen as hy toelaat dat hierdie boek alhier verkoop word, die nogal op die vooraand

van die volksfeeste ter herdenking aan die prestasies van ons volkshelde 'n hondert jaar gelede". The Minister of the Interior, he believed, should take the initiative and ban *Turning Wheels*.[11] The following day *Die Burger* carried a relatively long article whose author explained that Cloete's novel had received mixed reviews in the South African English press. He acknowledged that some critics had praised *Turning Wheels* but emphasised by reprinting lengthy excerpts from the negative commentaries which had appeared in both *The Star* and *The Cape Times* that Anglophone opinion was not unanimous.[12]

The reaction of *Die Burger* unleashed almost immediately a series of stormy protests in Afrikaans circles. The first of these took place on the afternoon of Thursday, 25 November in the nearby town of Stellenbosch, a predominantly Afrikaans small city, the second oldest in South Africa, known for its sublime geographical situation in the heart of a wine-producing region and its Afrikaans-medium university. There may have been a personal link at work in this arrangement; Geyer was both an *alumnus* of and former lecturer in history at that institution. At the behest of the local Afrikaans Nasionale Studentebond, reportedly more than 500 people assembled in protest to hear three members of the lecturing staff condemn *Turning Wheels*. This meeting, and the way in which it was reported in both the Afrikaans and, to a lesser degree, the English press, set part of the tone for the general protest against *Turning Wheels* and therefore merits analysis in some detail. The remarks of the speakers underscored their conviction that not merely an isolated book in poor taste was at stake, but that Cloete was part of a conspiracy of long standing to denigrate and oppress Afrikanerdom and the Afrikaans people.

Dr Hendrik Bernardus Thom (1905-1984) of the Department of History, an Afrikaner of Scottish descent who would serve as the chairman of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond* from 1952 until 1960,[13] was the first to address those assembled. He sought to place *Turning Wheels* into a historical context of anti-Afrikaner diatribes in English writing about southern Africa. He asserted without adducing evidence that conspiratorial forces were at work to blacken the reputation of Afrikaners: "Reeds lank is daar in Suid-Afrika 'n kampanje aan die gang om die Suid-Afrikaanse volk te beswadder vir dinge waarvoor daar geen grond bestaan nie". Particularly significant in this utterance, of course, is Thom's implicit equation of Afrikaners with "die Suid-Afrikaanse volk". This lecturer homogenised the origins of the trend in English writing to comment disparagingly on early Boers at the Cape by calling John Barrow's *Account of Travels* the fountain-head of this tradition and citing John Philip's *Researches in South Africa*, published in London in 1828 as a supposed sequel to the renowned British geographer's book. Thom perceived a scarlet thread running through these works straight to *Turning Wheels*, not least with regard to Barrow's supposedly

ground-breaking reporting of Boers' inhumane treatment of their servants and livestock, their rapacious quest for land, the negative attributes of their women, and, strangely enough, since Barrow wrote a generation before the Great Trek, "die sogenaamde onsedelikheid van die Voortrekkers". Particularly with regard to this fourth point, Thom declared, Cloete was no less culpable than Barrow. The affinity he perceived between the writing of these two authors led him to conclude that they were "geestesbroers".[14]

One of his colleagues, Dr P.J. Schoeman of the Department of Bantu Languages, addressed the issue from what was described in the Afrikaans press as "'n sielkundige oogpunt" but which again smacked of conspiracy theory. In his somewhat briefer remarks, he informed the audience that England had previously sought to subjugate South Africa by military force but was now seeking to crush the Afrikaans *volk* through intellectual means, especially the printed word. The cultural assault could be staved off, Schoeman believed, if Afrikaners were sufficiently diligent: "Ons wat op die voorposte staan, moet waak dat ons jeug nie in 'n geestelike hipnose verval nie en dat sulke ellendihede en vuilighede nie in ons land kom nie - Dit geld ons telkens in hierdie land".[15]

The final and principal speaker was Professor Eduard Christiaan Pienaar (1882-1949). A more likely man to play this rôle is difficult to imagine. A native of Potchefstroom, he had fought in Cronjé's commando during the Second Anglo-Boer War and spent time on St. Helena after being taken captive at Paardeberg in February 1900. In 1905 Pienaar had enrolled at Victoria College, which would shortly evolve into the University of Stellenbosch, where he received a baccalaureate degree three years hence. An avid reader of Dutch and Afrikaans literature, this erstwhile prisoner-of-war became an ardent nationalist and in 1911 accepted a call as lecturer in Dutch at his *alma mater*. During the First World War Pienaar studied Dutch language and literature at universities in Amsterdam and Utrecht, and he completed his academic preparation with a polemical doctoral thesis titled "Taal en poësie van die Tweede Afrikaanse taalbeweging". His efforts bore fruit in the form of a professorship of Dutch and Afrikaans at the University of Stellenbosch in 1920. A particularly consequential result of his nationalism was his part in founding the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings. No less significantly, during the 1930s his was a prominent voice in the movement to erect a monument to the Voortrekkers; that which was eventually constructed near Pretoria incorporated Pienaar's suggestion of a circle of ox wagons.[16]

Widely acknowledged as an inspiring orator, Pienaar used his rhetorical skills to thunder against *Turning Wheels* and its resented author. He plucked his hearers' emotional strings of pathos

and resentment in claiming, by way of example, that the history of the Second Anglo-Boer War was not being accurately taught in South African schools. "Nee, die historiese waarheid mag in ons land nie gehoor word nie", Pienaar generalised. He attributed this supposed state of affairs to his belief that Anglophone compatriots, "veral die 'Home' kompleks-tipe", were a sensitive lot but only with regard to themselves; their well of sensitivity ran dry when the feelings of Afrikaners were at issue. *Turning Wheels*, Pienaar contended, illustrated this vividly. Harking back to what would become a *Leitmotiv* in the campaign against Cloete's book, the infuriated professor cited the notorious novel by "Teer-en-Veer Lamont" as an example of ostensibly typical English vilifying of Afrikanerdom. Pienaar came very close to suggesting that an anti-Afrikaner conspiracy was at work in what he perceived as a continuing series of ethnic attacks of which the 1899-1902 war had been one part: "En hierdie nuutste poging sal ook nie die laaste wees nie, want dis nie 'n alleenstaande verskynsel nie, maar die openbaring van 'n anti-Afrikaanse gees - dieselfde gees wat eenmaal verklaar het: 'Ek sal die Afrikanerdom se nek breek!'" By standing united, this veteran of that conflagration vowed, Afrikaners would once again overcome threats to their existence as a people. Pienaar vented his ethnic indignation and wrath most graphically near the end of his speech in commenting on Cloete: "Wat die skrywer betref, daardie voormalige Britse offisier, as hy nog iets verdien in hierdie lewe, dan is dit 'n afgedankste par slae met 'n Voortrekker-agterossambok".[17]

The rhetoric of ethnic conspiracy and resentment made its mark on the people gathered in Stellenbosch. At the end of the assembly, those in attendance passed the following resolution, reportedly without dissent:

> Hierdie publieke vergadering van ingesetenes van Stellenbosch, dosente en studente, spreek hiermee sy diepste verontwaardiging uit oor die smadelike en histories onware voorstelling wat Stuart Cloete in sy pas verskene boek, "Turning Wheels", gee; te meer omdat dit, komende op die vooraand van die Groot Voortrekker-eeufees in 1938, seer seker nie bereken is om rassevrede in Suid-Afrika te bevorder en te bestendig nie. Derhalwe doen hierdie vergadering 'n dringende en ernstige beroep op die Regering, en by name op die Minister van Binnelandse Sake, om onverwyld 'n einde te maak aan die verdere verkoop van die boek in Suid-Afrika en om voorts ten sterkste protes daarteen aan te teken by die Britse regering.[18]

The Stellenbosch rally was promptly reported in great detail in the Afrikaans press (much of which supported the National Party), usually as front page material. Cloete's general treatment of the Voortrekkers was repeatedly characterised as "beswaddering" and "bekladding".[19] Some of the major Anglophone daily newspapers also reported the event.

The Afrikaans Protest Proliferates

The efforts of Geyer to arouse public hostility against *Turning Wheels* had almost immediate results in Cape Town, throughout the Boland, and in other regions of the Cape Province. Within a few weeks of the gathering in Stellenbosch, further protest meetings occurred in numerous other towns. They, too, received extensive press coverage, especially in *Die Burger*. To cite but a few examples, at their meeting in Woodstock on 6 December Capetonian members of the National Party univocally objected to "die jongste beswaddering van die Afrikaanse voorgeslagte" in *Turning Wheels* and called attention to the fact that the book had come from Europe. They asked the government to ban it.[20] Fellow supporters of the National Party also assembled in Ceres on 2 December and adopted a resolution expressing their "sterkste afkeuring" at the "lasterlike en smerige boek 'Turning Wheels', uit die pen van Stuart Cloete, waarin die eer, karakter en godsdiens van die Voortrekkers beswadder en belaster word". These residents of Ceres and the immediate vicinity demanded that the government ban the book.[21] On the same day, it was reported from the Eastern Cape that Nationalists from that town as well as Cradock, Middelburg, and Tarkastad had just met in the Hofmeyr city hall and unanimously passed a motion calling on the government to ban *Turning Wheels* and lodge a protest against it with the publisher. These incensed Afrikaners simultaneously expressed their gratitude to the lecturers and students at the University of Stellenbosch for, in their words, spontaneously taking the initiative in launching the protest movement against Cloete's book.[22] A week later, members of the Bosbergse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging held their annual meeting in Somerset East and passed a protest resolution whose wording suggested that its drafters had closely read reports of the assembly in Stellenbosch. They repeated almost *verbatim* remarks made there that Cloete "'n flagrante wanvoorstelling van feite wat in 'n roman met selfs die dunste historiese agtergrond nie mag gedoog word nie", that *Turning Wheels* "propageer die wanvoorstelling a la Barrow en Philip", and that Cloete "stel daardeur die gesonde samewerking waarna in Suid-Afrika gestrewe word, in gevaar". Looking forward to the centenary to be observed the following year, these guardians of Afrikaans culture

in the Eastern Cape also took exception to the "tergende bespotting van die roemryke verlede wat die volk in 1938 voornemens is om met pietistiese hulde groots is vir en herdenk".[23] From nearby Pearston, a journalist reported that the town was in an uproar over *Turning Wheels* and that many a burgher there was declaring, "As ek Cloete in die hande kon kry!" The citizenry had not forgotten the wrath that had been directed at the author of *War, Wine and Women* in 1932: "Dis dan ook met die innigste leedwese dat Pearston verneem het van die dood van dr. Steyn Vorster, was daardie onwettige en tog pragtige teer-en-veer-daad teenoor Lamont gedoen het".[24] At Jansenville, a small town north-west of Port Elizabeth, the parish council of the Dutch Reformed Church unanimously protested against "daardie belasterende, onsedelike en histories-onware boek van Stuart Cloete" and against his "skandelike en weersinwekkende bespotting van die sedes en godsdienssin van ons voorouers".[25] Farther afield, press coverage of the Stellenbosch gathering caught the attention of incensed Afrikaners on the Witwatersrand. In Johannesburg, members of the local branch of the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging met at the hall of the railway administration on 27 November and voted to lodge a protest against *Turning Wheels* with both the South African government and the British high commissioner.[26]

Letters from readers also poured into the Afrikaans press. Again, *Die Burger* played the leading rôle in publicising public indignation. In accord with editorial opinion, some Afrikaners who used this medium to vent their feelings perceived *Turning Wheels* as a manifestation of a broader, international tendency to undermine their values and lifestyle. One identified only as "J.J." from Cape Town, for instance, lamented in an utterance which indicated that at least historically his ethnic identity overshadowed his geographical loyalty that "ons onsterflike president Paul Kruger word in Engelse films bespotlik voorgestel" and, with regard to ethnic dimensions of the turbulent South African political scene during the interwar decades, "Op die Parade kan kommunistiese naturelle-opswepers ure lank ongestraf die Afrikaanse volk beledig". J.J. evinced no respect for others' freedom of expression. Indeed, he quoted approvingly a recent remark by a judge in England who had taken to task an English author and publisher for defamatory comments about an earlier king and stated his opinion that such *lèse majesté* should be punished with a horsewhip. In a similar frame of mind, this Capetonian also remembered with unveiled pleasure the tarring and feathering of Lamont five years earlier. Obviously weary of seeing Afrikaners in general subjected to derogatory treatment, J.J. sought to fight with a similar rhetorical weapon by generalising that certain people have a need to insult others and that "die Engelse volk skyn nog groter genot daarin te vind sulke laagstaande lektuur te verslind".[27]

Words alone were insufficient punishment for Cloete and his book, according to a resident of Port Elizabeth who wrote to *Die Oosterlig* of that city, a conservative newspaper which had been launched on 20 August 1937 in the presence of D.F. Malan and other delegates to a congress of the Cape National Party, under the *nom de guerre* "Jong Turk". "Ons sal sorg dat die hemeltergende boek verban word", he vowed; in the meantime, "al moet ons hour [*sic*] in stapels aan die brand steek. Trouens hy hoort tuis op die brandstapel".[28]

Writing from Grahamstown, I.J. Rousseau characterised *Turning Wheels* as "een van die liederlike geslagsromans wat die ou wêreld al buikvol van is". Cloete's fiction was a product of cultural and intellectual degeneracy in Europe, he averred, "een van die verderflike gevolge van die sogenaamde sielkunde waarvan Freud, Jung, en Adler die peetvaders is, om nie eens H.G. Wells en Bernard Shaw te noem nie". Rousseau did not attempt to delineate the alleged lines of influence linking Cloete with this diverse group of European intellectuals who had effectively challenged many prevailing beliefs, mores, and values and thereby helped to usher in twentieth-century modernism. Instead, he merely suggested that rather than wasting their money to satisfy their curiosity about *Turning Wheels* readers purchase Totius's popular commentary on the Psalms for a mere 5/6.[29]

Some Afrikaans journalists found the international chorus of praise for *Turning Wheels* particularly irritating. The editor of *Die Oosterlig*, for instance, reproduced at length what he regarded as naïve excerpts from Jane Spence Southron's favourable review in *The New York Times*.[30] He did likewise for critiques which had appeared in London and devoted considerable space to reproducing sections of David Gamble's comments in *The Cape Argus*.[31]

To Ban Or Not To Ban?

Virtually from the outset of the protracted protest which *Die Burger* had launched, Afrikaans editors, ecclesiastical bodies, politicians, and leaders of the ethnic cultural movement demanded that *Turning Wheels* be banned in the Union of South Africa. Not everyone, of course, agreed. Especially in Anglophone intellectual circles, advocates of the freedom of expression voiced their concerns. This may have been attributable in part to memory of the Lamont incident in 1932, but quite apart from that highly publicised event, the idea of suppressing literature contradicted many people's notions of twentieth-century political liberty.

Most of the calls for banning *Turning Wheels* were not accompanied by extensive, written justification; the indignant Afrikaners who angrily demanded that the book be forbidden rarely went beyond the reasons we have already cited in connection with protest meetings in late November and early December 1937. One detailed exception which sheds additional light on how some critics perceived the historical context of the matter appeared in the columns of *Die Volksblad*, a newspaper published in Bloemfontein. The editor of that daily underscored his belief that some foreigners had written fairly about the Great Trek and adduced Eugénie de Kalb's "pragtige boek" *Far Enough* as an example of evenhandedness which constituted an exception to regrettable tendencies in "die dekadente, moderne beskawing". Furthermore, the undeniable popularity of *Turning Wheels* did not cause him to despair. He recalled that earlier in the century the Askews' *The Shulamite* had caused a furore in South Africa but that General Louis Botha, who was then the Prime Minister of the Transvaal, had succeeded in having its distribution halted by protesting to the British government in 1907. This hopeful editor noted that in recent years publishers in England had voluntarily withdrawn various books and expressed his belief that the reputable firm of Collins in London had been poorly advised about *Turning Wheels* and might reconsider the defensibility of continuing to distribute copies of it, although he did not betray great confidence that it would do so. Under the circumstances, he thought, "Die minste wat die Suid-Afrikaanse regering nou kan doen is om vereers die invoer van die boek hier te lande stop te sit; en verder 'n kabelgram aan die Britse regering te stuur om op terugtrekking van die uitgawe in die land van oorsprong aan te dring".[32]

As cries for forbidding the further importation and sale of Cloete's novel mounted, *The Rand Daily Mail* of Johannesburg went on the offensive and sought to forestall this action. In an editorial published on 29 November, the editor of that liberal newspaper, Lewis Rose Macleod, a New Zealander by birth who had edited a newspaper in New South Wales, Australia, before emigrating to South Africa in 1905 and who had taken the helm of *The Rand Daily Mail* in 1924, acknowledged that critical opinion of the literary merit of *Turning Wheels* was divided. That, however, was of little relevance. What disturbed Macleod was that demands for its banning were being made not on "moral grounds" but chiefly because "it presents a Voortrekker in a somewhat unfavourable light". This editor perceived in the call for excluding *Turning Wheels* from South Africa "an element of racial and even political censorship which must arouse very serious apprehension". Macleod called on Minister of the Interior Richard Stuttaford to resist demands for a ban, contending that relenting to attacks on Cloete's book "could only be the prelude to the restriction of the liberty of thought and free expression in many other ways".[33]

This editorial prompted an Afrikaner in Johannesburg to reply in a letter to *Die Transvaler*, which had been launched earlier that year under the editorship of the imperious H.F. Verwoerd. He took exception in the strongest terms to what he believed was Cloete's unfair and inaccurate portrayal of Voortrekker morality. "As 'n kleinseun van iemand wat 'n groot rol in die Groot Trek gespeel het, wil ek hier onomwonde sê dat ek, as ek aan die Voortrekkers dink, in die eerste plek aan hulle dink as persone wat sedelik baie hoog gestaan het en wat die oorwinnings wat hulle behaal het nie aan hulle self maar aan die God van hulle vaders, wat hulle steeds trou gelei het, toegeskryf het", explained this Pretorian, "manne wat gereeld om lig gebid het en genoeg ontvang het vir elke dag en die volgende dae ook; manne en vrouens wat sonder hulle Bybels niks sou uitgevoer het nie, en wat steeds reg deur see gegaan het met hulp van Bo". He did not disclose what the source of this generalised concept of his ancestors was, but in any case he resented Cloete's questioning of his belief in their lofty moral standards and spiritual vigour. This grandson of Voortrekkers took to task the editor of *The Rand Daily Mail* for counselling toleration and for declaring a belief that the Minister of the Interior would not participate in the constriction of the freedom of expression in South Africa. He proclaimed that the editor in question would never be in a position to see the matter through Afrikaans eyes and vowed, "Jou silwerpil sal geen fatsoenlike Afrikaner sluk nie".[34]

Richard Stuttaford (1870-1945) vacillated as demands that he ban *Turning Wheels* mounted. His position on the matter did not indicate any particular understanding of the cultural or ethical issues involved, nor did it betray any strength of character on his part. The eldest son of an immigrant from England who had launched a highly successful retail business in Cape Town, he had devoted much of his early career to his family's enterprises before entering local politics and eventually gaining a seat in the House of Assembly as a representative of the South African Party for Newlands. Respected for his expertise in commercial issues, Stuttaford received the portfolio of Minister of the Interior and Public Health in 1936. His ethnic sentiments would come to the fore two years later when on Union Day, 1938, "God Save the King" was not played at official celebrations. He resigned in protest against what he regarded as an affront. A reserved man who did not relish the strife inherent in South African politics, Stuttaford generally attempted to avoid what he believed were unnecessary and alienating conflicts.[35]

Stuttaford briefly refused to capitulate to mounting public pressure to exercise his authority to ban *Turning Wheels*. This angered several Afrikaans editors who believed the matter deserved immediate attention. On 30 November, for example, less than a week before the issue was first raised in *Die Burger*, *Die Transvaler* complained that not even the first steps towards possibly

forbidding the importation of Cloete's book had been taken.[36] The following day Stuttaford stated in an interview that he would give the matter his full attention as soon as he had recovered from an illness and received instructions from the government in Pretoria about how to proceed.[37]

Stuttaford relented and on 8 December decreed that the government would not allow further copies of *Turning Wheels* to be imported. When the *Cape Times* contacted him by telephone at his farm near Stellenbosch that evening, he revealed that he held the book in high regard and that he did not regard it as a calumnious treatment of the Afrikaners. "My chief reaction after reading the book was one of tremendous admiration for the Voortrekkers", the minister insisted. In his opinion, "The author painted a glowing picture of the pioneers' fight against overwhelming odds. The incidents complained of seemed to me comparatively minor against the broad theme of bravery of the book as a whole". Stuttaford conceded that not everything in *Turning Wheels* was uplifting and that it contained certain "murky passages". He emphasised, however, that "I thoroughly enjoyed the novel and would recommend it to anyone - even if I hesitated to give it to a Sunday school". Stuttaford may have spoken for many sceptics in wondering "how many of the book's critics have actually read it". With regard to his decision to halt the importation of *Turning Wheels*, the minister stressed that had the determination been exclusively his prerogative, he would not have intervened. Only because of the "vast outcry" which had arisen against this volume across much of South Africa, Stuttaford had chosen to heed the recommendation of the Censor Board and ban Cloete's highly controversial book.[38]

Not everyone in the government shared Stuttaford's benign impression of *Turning Wheels* at that time. The *Cape Times* also contacted Minister of Lands General J.C.G. Kemp at a meeting in Wolmaransstad on the evening of 8 December and solicited his opinion of the book. This colleague of Stuttaford replied bluntly, though without specifically mentioning Cloete's novel, "I disapprove of any literature that is scandalous and detrimental to the morals and character of Afrikaner youth". Kemp did not state whether he had actually read *Turning Wheels*.[39]

The Afrikaans press was clearly gratified by Stuttaford's decision, but his comments about the book failed to mollify its critics. Some Afrikaners, for that matter, thought that he had added insult to injury by praising *Turning Wheels*. In Bloemfontein, for example, the editor of *Die Volksblad* remarked in an editorial the day after the banning that Stuttaford's comments were an "onbeskaamdheid" and added that the minister's record of supporting in Parliament legislation against miscegenation called into question the sincerity of his remark that nothing in *Turning Wheels* was particularly objectionable, notwithstanding accusations that Cloete had represented interracial sexual relations as a common phenomenon amongst the Voortrekkers. Concluding that "Mnr.

Stuttaford onderskryf met sy kommentaar die grofste aanstote in die verbode boek", this editor challenged other members of the South African government to respond to his endorsement.[40] The editor of *Die Burger* thanked Stuttaford in an editorial for a "bevredigend" outcome of the case but found it regrettable that official consideration of the matter had taken longer than necessary. He suggested, however, that the South African government ask that of the United Kingdom to suppress *Turning Wheels* there, as well. As a precedent for taking such an action, this National Party supporter recalled that the South African government had apologised to the Italian government after something distasteful about Mussolini had appeared in one of the newspapers in Natal. "Die goeie naam van die Italiaanse staatshoof is vir sy land niks meer werd as die goeie naam van die Voortrekkers vir die burgers van Suid-Afrika nie", he reasoned.[41]

The banning of *Turning Wheels* immediately made problematical the plan of one Afrikaner to translate it into Afrikaans. Strictly speaking, domestic publication of the book in any language, as opposed to its importation from abroad, was not covered in Stuttaford's ruling. As was noted in the English-medium press at the time, *Turning Wheels* could continue to circulate in South Africa unless a court found it indecent or obscene.[42] This was apparently never done.

The controversy continued to echo occasionally in the Afrikaans press well into the following year. In May 1938, the editor of *Die Oosterlig* approvingly reproduced lengthy excerpts from the March issue of the Flemish periodical *Dietbrand* in which a reviewer identified only as "J.H.B." had declared of *Turning Wheels*, "Roman-technisch is het boek een prul" and concluded that Cloete's imagination had run wild, allowing him to write "allerlei onwaarschijnslijks" into his text. This critic also believed that "in psychologische karakterteekening schiet de schrijver op talrijke plaatsen te kort", although illustrations of this were not cited in the extracts reproduced in *Die Oosterlig*. A counterpart writing in the April issue of *De Dietsche Gedachte* agreed with this general assessment: "Het boek heeft allereerst een onhistorischen kijk op den Grooten Trek en de Voortrekkers en bevat allerlei vreemde fantasterijen. Als roman is het door zijn conceptie en uitwerking een mislukt boek te noemen". He noted that *Turning Wheels* had been banned in South Africa and found it incomprehensible that it was being translated into Dutch for publication in The Netherlands.[43]

Commentators of more liberal bent were also displeased with Stuttaford, though obviously for different reasons. Rex V. Hall, the editor of the *Pretoria News*, which had staunchly defended Lamont's freedom of expression five years earlier, thought the public had a right to know precisely why Stuttaford had banned *Turning Wheels*. Like many of his counterparts at both Afrikaans and South African English newspapers, he believed that the demands for the suppression of Cloete's

novel would prove counterproductive and declared hyperbolically that Stuttaford's action "by provocation will annex the entire reading public of South Africa to this new author". This Pretorian disagreed with the assertion of Geyer at *Die Burger* that *Turning Wheels* was in the same category as *War, Wine and Women*, claiming that in contrast to Lamont's autobiographical novel Cloete's historical fiction was "written without malice". Hall generalised that Cloete's Voortrekkers were not finely drawn but "huge, primeval, and violent, with an aura of ectoplasmic gloom". All things considered, *Turning Wheels* was not "worth all the fuss". The editor suggested that had this book not appeared on the eve of the centenary of the Great Trek, it would neither have aroused such heated debate nor been banned. His estimation of Stuttaford's action was blunt and severe: "The ban betrays a weakened fibre, almost pathologic sensitivity, and a complete disregard of the principles of freedom without which the great republic of letters cannot last a day".[44]

The Natal Mercury reported that public reaction in Durban to Stuttaford's capitulation was equally swift and severe. "The Minister's remarks display utter cynicism and lack of backbone", declared one "well known literary authority" whose name was not disclosed. "He says, in effect, that he sees nothing wrong with the book but rather than have a fuss he is prepared to climb down". Another local intellectual, Mabel Palmer (1876-1958), an Englishwoman by birth and Fabian socialist by conviction who had recently retired as a lecturer in economic history at Natal University College, had not read *Turning Wheels* but called its banning "preposterous". "Where would literature be if any book that was not liked by any particular section had been banned?" she asked. "No book should be banned unless it contained criminal tendencies, and even then only after serious consideration. Are we to ban a book that mentions cocktail parties because the temperance people do not like it?" This pacifist used her own stance on a current ethical issue as a further example: "Are we to ban books mentioning war because pacifists object? . . . I would not suggest such a thing".[45] In a letter to the editor of *The Natal Mercury*, a reader who adopted the appellation "This Freedom" drew a comparison between Afrikaans and British reactions to ethnic characterisation in fiction about the Great Trek. "Brett Young, in his book 'They Seek a Country,' has some very hard things to say about the British", he noted without exaggeration. "Britishers, however, reading these remarks, will probably not get too hot and bothered and will certainly not dream of trying to get the book banned in South Africa". Calling Stuttaford's decision "another surrender to a narrow, bitter section of the Afrikaans community" which was suffering from "a strong inferiority complex", This Freedom wondered why "nothing is said if anything British is criticised, but if anything is said about the Dutch race there is the devil to play [*sic*?]". He placed the incident into the context of contemporary international political

developments by criticising the South African government's recent apology to that of Italy and encouraging the press to continue to speak out boldly on current issues: "To my mind, it is up to the Press to do something, as the people of this country have no desire to become Nazis, and neither would we have our rulers ape the methods of that saintly gentleman, Mussolini, even though we should save lots of money in paper and fawning apologies".[46]

Agreeing fully with these sentiments, the editor of *The Natal Mercury* published on 10 December an editorial titled "Censorship Gone Mad". Stuttaford's broaching of an "outcry"against *Turning Wheels* seemed contrived or at least unfounded. Apparently ignorant of Afrikaners' sensitivities in the matter and incognizant of the ensuing widely publicised gathering in Stellenbosch and various other protests in the Cape, he declared that "apart from a hysterical protest in the Afrikaans Press and a few sporadic references to it at women's meetings on the Platteland, we are not aware that there has been any public demonstration against the book, and indeed we find it difficult to accept that there could possibly be a public outcry". Aiming at the heart of Afrikaner nationalism, he averred that "to maintain that any substantial section of the Afrikaans community can possibly take exception to the book is to suggest that they suffer from that extreme sensitiveness to criticism which is the hallmark of racial immaturity, or of an extreme inferiority complex". In contrast to his counterpart at the *Pretoria News*, this Natalian journalist regarded *Turning Wheels* as "a remarkably fine novel" and tempered his praise only by admitting that it had "certain defects due to immaturity in craftsmanship". What bothered him, however, was that Stuttaford's action was another instance of unnecessary censorship. He noted that recently the American socialist Upton Sinclair's *¡No Pasaran!*, a novel about the Spanish Civil War, had been banned in South Africa because it contained patently leftist propaganda. The spectre of such control over cultural life disturbed him and pointed to future developments when the National Party again acceded to power. "Must we believe that literature dealing with political theories can be kept from our bookshelves merely because they are out of harmony with the tenets of our legislators? Such an assumption strikes at the very roots of democratic life", he argued presciently.[47]

One of the severest denunciations of the banning order predictably appeared editorially in *The Rand Daily Mail* on 10 December. Looking retrospectively at the controversy of the past two and one-half weeks, the editor of that liberal newspaper laid the blame for what he regarded as an absurd and self-defeating action on the doorsteps of various Afrikaners in the Cape. In caustic, thinly veiled references to *Die Burger* and other Afrikaans newspapers as well as to Pienaar and his colleagues who had addressed the gathering in Stellenbosch the previous month, he

lamented that "Mr. Cloete is denounced as a traitor by a section of the Press, and University nit-wits in sleepy educational centres have half-awakened from their customary state of somnolence to mutter dark threats of tar and feathers". This journalist found it virtually incomprehensible that statesmen like Jan Smuts, Jan Hofmeyr, and Deneys Reitz, "all reputed to be men of enlightened mind and a broad tolerance of spirit", would lend their support to "this grievous assault upon intellectual freedom and literary achievement". Rather than censure Cloete for creating a morally mixed gallery of fictitious Voortrekkers, he reasoned, South Africa should take pride in his ability to paint the Great Trek "with a vividness which has rarely, if ever, been excelled in a work of fiction of South African origin". He also believed that in this case the government had put the rhetorical noose around its own neck. "We hear a great deal of more or less official complaint nowadays of undesirable publicity given to South Africa in news of Union origin appearing in certain overseas newspapers", he argued, "but it is difficult to think of anything more admirably calculated to supply a bad impression of the country than much of the news which is greated by the Government's own actions".

Reactions at Public Libraries

Public librarians in various regions of South Africa found themselves in a tightening dilemma as protests against *Turning Wheels* mounted in early December. On the one hand, they were cognizant of their calling to respond to the demands of the reading public for popular books. On the other hand, in the 1930s there still existed in South Africa, as elsewhere, a widely accepted tenet that public librarianship implied exercising moral responsibility in the selection and administration of circulating materials in accordance with local mores. South African librarians consequently responded in various ways to the decision to stop the importation of *Turning Wheels*. Its banning did not legally require public librarians to purge the book from their collections or withdraw it from circulation, but some elected to do so anyway while others opted to fulfil the demand for this increasingly popular novel. At the Durban Municipal Library, chief librarian Franklin Rooke reported two days after the banning was announced that public interest had just grown exponentially and that his staff was receiving between fifty and sixty enquiries about *Turning Wheels* daily. The collection contained no fewer than twenty-two copies.[48] In Cape Town, the South African Library possessed six copies of *Turning Wheels*, all of which were on loan when the banning was announced, and had placed an order for an additional three. The names of

fifty-three subscribers were then on a waiting list for it. According to a report published in *The Cape Argus*, the book would continue in circulation unless the Board of Trustees received "solid complaints" and chose to withdraw it.[49] The chief librarian at the South African Library since 1909, English immigrant and Cantabrigian Alan C.G. Lloyd (1879-1957), left open that possibility, explaining that as a state institution it was accountable to the policies of the government. He made clear, however, his personal disagreement with Stuttaford's decision and, like many other observers, predicted that it would prove counterproductive. "To ban a book is to advertise it, and also the surest way of driving it underground", explained Lloyd. "I remember about 15 years ago an attack being made on one of [English novelist and dramatist] Arnold Bennett's books. The immediate result was that one bookseller in South Africa ordered a further 1,000 copies". This prominent librarian suggested that Francis Brett Young's *They Seek a Country* was artistically superior to Cloete's work but that the former had not been in vogue because it was not the subject of a public dispute. At the same time, it was reported that 2 500 copies of *Turning Wheels* had already been sold in South Africa, some 1 500 of them in Cape Town, where on the day of the banning not a single copy remained on the shelves of the local booksellers.[50] A week later, however, it was announced that following a decision of the State Library in Pretoria to remove *Turning Wheels*, the South African Library would do likewise but only after honouring its commitment to the fifty-three people already on the waiting list for the volume. Other public libraries in the Cape Peninsula reportedly chose a similar course.[51]

At the conservative end of the spectrum, as early as 6 December, two days before Stuttaford made his decision, the public librarian at Douglas, a town in the Eastern Cape, responded to local protests against *Turning Wheels* by removing it from the shelves in the reading room, an action which was duly reported in *Die Burger* in the same column as its coverage of protests in Cape Town and Jansenville.[52]

At the Kimberley Public Library, the books committee sought to navigate a *via media* by placing *Turning Wheels* in its "restricted class" a few days after Stuttaford announced the banning. This local status meant that Cloete's book would not be displayed on open shelves but would be available to any subscriber who specifically requested access to it. It was reported by the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, a local daily newspaper, that the volume was being "fairly avidly read in Kimberley" and that twelve people had already applied to read the library's two copies, while the names of five other individuals were on a waiting list. A local bookseller had informed the newspaper that he had ordered a dozen copies, all of which had been sold promptly. He believed that he

could have disposed of many more but that rumours of a possible ban had convinced him not to replenish his stock.[53]

Offers to Revise the Text

Less than twenty-four hours after the banning, it was reported in *The Times* of London that the South African government had forbidden further imports of Cloete's book "because Afrikaans-speaking people throughout the Union have protested strongly against passages in the book which describe immorality among the Voortrekkers (Dutch pioneers)".[54] Within a few days, and with reports of great demand for it appearing frequently in the South African press, both Cloete and his publisher in the British capital publicly offered to sanitise the text of *Turning Wheels* and remove those passages which many Afrikaners had found offensive. A representative of *The Natal Mercury* in London contacted Ian Collins of the publishing firm bearing his surname a day after the banning was made known. Collins offered an olive branch: "We should be more than prepared to explore the possibility of removing from the book whatever passages are considered offensive, in order that the book, whose real purpose has been to do justice to the magnificent heroism of the early Dutch pioneers, should not receive any check to its triumphant progress throughout the world - for it is now appearing in five languages".[55] Cloete also offered in general terms to expurgate the text. He did not specify more closely the extent to which he was willing to revise it, however, or whether he would allow any arbiter to determine this matter. Cloete emphasised that the characters he had created were fictitious but that many of the events he had related were based on either his paternal grandfather's diaries or accounts he had heard while working on farms in the Transvaal. He insisted that he had not misrepresented the Voortrekkers in general and that, notwithstanding the many accusations of calumny which had been levelled at him, he remained a keen admirer of the Boers who had undertaken the Great Trek.[56] There appears to have been little public response to Cloete's offer, though, at least when gauged by the fact that the Afrikaans press, having won at least a Pyrhhic victory in the matter, chose to ignore it. Subsequent printings of *Turning Wheels* continued to contain the account of Hendrik van der Berg's murder of his son, that Voortrekker leader's lustful thoughts concerning Louisa, and a host of misspelt Afrikaans words.

Whose Holy Cow Is Being Gored? An Indian Protest

The publicity which the *Turning Wheels* controversy received spread beyond the Afrikaans and Anglophone European segments of the South African population and stimulated an analogous protest from a much different quarter. Shortly after the dispute erupted, an editor of *Indian Views*, a weekly journal published in Durban, protested in an editorial that one lesson in a recent edition of the *Young South Africa English Reader*, which the Transvaal Education Department had approved for paedagogical use in Afrikaans schools in that province, was titled "Coolie" and focussed on the inhumane treatment which a fictitious Indian trader gave his horse. In this story, a group of benevolent school children find an emaciated horse lying along a road and sympathetically decide to save it by purchasing it from its indifferent owner. The youngsters deliberate upon a suitable name for their new possession, and one of them suggests that it be called "Coolie" "because we got it from that cruel Indian". This riled the editor in Durban, who pointed out that the only reference to anyone of his race in the entire book was this negatively depicted Indian. The parallel to the contemporary dispute in the South African press seemed too obvious to ignore. "Even as we write this, Afrikaners through the length and breadth of the Union are busy protesting indignantly against the newly published novel, 'Turning Wheels,' by Stuart Cloete, which is said to present the Voortrekkers in an unsavoury light", he noted. The Indian editor pointed out that in that case his counterpart at *Die Burger* had insisted that the Minister of the Interior act on the matter immediately. He suggested with no mean optimism, "If we, too, may venture upon a hope, it is that the attention of its people will be directed by the 'Burger' to the need of learning to abhor for others what they would abhor for themselves and, having learnt it, to voice as emphatic a protest against the wanton hurt to other people's feeling inflicted so often by their own writers and speakers". The Indian editor pointed out that in countless instances the opprobrious term "coolie" had occurred in South African statutes and that members of Parliament had frequently employed it without apparent compunction. He suggested that the offensive language and exclusively negative image of an Indian in the story in the reader receive the attention of the government and the Natal Indian Congress.[57]

The Disposition of the Imported Books

When Stuttaford issued his banning order, it was reported in the Cape Town press that 1 000 copies of *Turning Wheels* were *en route* from England. The Collector of Customs at Cape Town harbour announced that when they arrived, the consignment of which they were a part would be opened immediately and in all probability the books would be destroyed.[58] Three days later it was reported that the shipment had arrived on the *Warwick Castle*, but that its fate had not been decided. C.A. Roy, a representative of Collins in South Africa, emphasised to the press the obvious wish of that firm that if the copies were not admitted to the country for circulation, they be returned to England for possible sale either there or in another country. The demand for *Turning Wheels*, he stated, was considerable on an international scale.[59] Collins apparently got its wish fulfilled after a few weeks. In London, *The Times* could report with slight relief in early January 1938 that the copies of *Turning Wheels* which had been confiscated in Cape Town would not be destroyed but returned to Collins in the British capital.[60]

Different Strokes for Different Folks? An Anglophone Protest

Placed into the context of South African publishing during the 1930s, the controversy over *Turning Wheels* sheds additional light when juxtaposed with a dispute several months later involving an Afrikaans memoir, a controversy in which some participants complained that the banning of Cloete's book should serve as a precedent which the government should follow when dealing with controversial literature in Afrikaans. Sarah Raal (1873-1949) was a farmer's daughter near Edenburg in the southern part of the Orange Free State when the Second Anglo-Boer War erupted in October 1899. After her parents and some of her siblings were taken to the Jagersfontein concentration camp as part of the internationally vilified British campaign against civilian Afrikaners,[61] she briefly continued to run the family farm, Olyvenfontein, but eventually abandoned that effort to join her ethnic brethren in guerrilla warfare against the *Rooinekke*, serving in a unit under *Kommandant* Nieuwoudt, who in turn was responsible to the great Free State military leader, General James Barry Munnik Hertzog. Twice interned in concentration camps, Raal succeeded in escaping once but, owing to illness, remained nearly to the end of the war in 1902 after being recaptured.[62] By her own testimony, this female warrior wrote a manuscript about her martial

experiences a few years after the conclusion of hostilities, and in 1925 an unspecified South African publisher expressed interest in converting it into a book, but for some undisclosed reason that was not done at that time.[63] Quite in harmony with its stated intention of advancing Afrikaner nationalism, *Die Burger* serialised Raal's account on a weekly basis beginning on 5 December 1936. In late 1937, Nasionale Pers these wartime memoirs as a relatively brief volume titled *Met die Boere in die Veld. Die Ervarings van die Skryfster.*[64]

Most of the text is uncontroversial and of scant relevance to the present study. Raal's comments about the gratuitous torturing of sheep and other livestock by British soldiers, however, and particularly her descriptions of life in concentration camps had strong rhetorical repercussions. In places, one finds a reconstruction of unmitigated suffering amongst the inmates. "In byna elke tent kan jy die gesteun van 'n sieke hoor, een elke dag word daar ses of sewe mense begrawe", Raal recalled. She thought the camps were especially emotionally difficult for children, and that the British authorities had little concern for the lives of young Boers: "Klein oout kindertjies word van die moeders se bors afgeskeur en na die hospitaal geneem, waarvandaan hule nooit weer terugkom nie. Dan het ek ook kinders gesien wat nog lewe maar na die dodehuis gedra word". Bedridden patients were suffered neglect and were consequently subjected to torture by vermin: "In die hospitaal had ek gesien dat die outjies wat koors het, te swak is om die vlieë van hul ou gesiggies weg te ja. Dan kruip die brommers in die neusgate op, en nie te lank nie of die wurms loop by die neusie uit. Ek wou van my verstand raak tussen al die smart en ellende". What caused the most intense controversy, however, were Raal's allegations that British warders sytematically murdered inmates. Changing into what reads like a hearsay mode of expression, she declared in passing, "Hier word fyngemaalde glas en virtioel in die suiker gegooi". Whether she had observed or merely heard about such potentially lethal contamination of the food, however, is not clear from the text.[65]

Possibly owing to the fact that Raal had written in Afrikaans, several months passed before *Met die Boere in die Veld* aroused the ire of the English press in South Africa. In August 1938, however, a reader in Plumstead informed the editor of *The Cape Argus* that a calumnious book was on the market designed to heighten tensions between Boers and Britons in the Union. The editor, in turn, contacted Sarah Raal, whose legal name was then Mrs. O.J. Snyman and who resided in Warren Street, Tamboerskloof in Cape Town. She insisted that she had not intended to insult anyone but had merely exercised her right to record her memories of the war. This author, then approximately sixty-five years old, insisted that everything in her book was based on her personal observations, including the remark about deliberately contaminated food: "I saw the glass and

vitriol with my own eyes". Far from nurturing bitterness towards anything British, moreover, she declared, "I have many very dear English friends in Cape Town and elsewhere".[66]

These remarks failed to satisfy the editor of *The Cape Argus*, who immediately wrote an editorial in which he labelled the volume in question "a deplorable book"and ventured that "nobody outside a lunatic asylum is likely to believe that women and children were murdered in the concentration camps by the mixing of ground glass in their food". He found the denigrating accounts of the British during the 1899-1902 war especially lamentable that "their resurrection from the tomb is not likely to disturb the slumbers of the English-speaking people" but nevertheless demanded that *Met die Boere in die Veld* "be withdrawn from circulation".[67]

Stuttaford Challenged in the House of Assembly Regarding *Met die Boere in die Veld*

Richard Stuttaford, still a Member of Parliament from Claremont and Minister of the Interior and Minister of Public Health in Hertzog's Fusion government, had to face the ire of Anglophone deputies in the House of Assembly who had not forgotten his highly public role in reluctantly banning the further importation of *Turning Wheels* some eight months earlier. On 9 August H.A. Tothill, who represented Bezuidenhout, provocatively asked him during open debate, "Whether in view of the misstatements and false matter in the book "Met die Boere in die Veld", by Sarah Raal, which false statements are calculated to stir up racial feelings in this country, he will forbid the sale of the book; and, if not, why not". Stuttaford replied negatively, explaining in one sentence that he did not have the authority to prohibit books published in the Union". Later that day R.J. du Toit, who represented the Cape Flats, repeated the question in only slightly modified form, asserting that Raal's account was "calculated, by its vilification of British troops in the Boer War, to promote racial hatred", and called attention explicitly to the banning of *Turning Wheels*. Again, Stuttaford emphasised that the matter was essentially *ultra vires*. When du Toit asked him whether he would consider introducing legislation to empower him in such cases, the Minister of the Interior replied, "Should objectionable literature be published in the Union to any large degree, consideration may have to be given to introduction of legislation".[68]

Stuttaford's professed inability to act was construed in the South African English press as a refusal to do. The editor of *The Rand Daily Mail* lamented that "an extraordinarily unbalanced

situation seems to have arisen as a result of his vigilant censorship" and predicted long-term injustice in this respect:

> For it is perfectly clear that books criticising one section of the population will almost certainly be published, if at all, in South Africa, while those attacking the other section will much more probably be printed oversea. Racialists of one political colour, therefore, have practically unlimited freedom of abuse, while those on the other are muzzled, so far as this country is concerned, by the Minister's watchfulness.[69]

His counterpart at the *Eastern Province Herald* in Port Elizabeth, who a few days earlier had publicly called for the banning of Raal's book, echoed a similar sentiment, declaring that Stuttaford's decision placed "A Premium on Slander".[70]

The Afrikaans press, by contrast, vigorously defended Raal and *Met die Boere in die Veld* and used the furore to fan the still smouldering resentment of Afrikaners regarding the concentration camps. Having published the text serially several months earlier, *Die Burger* naturally led the charge, taking to task on its front page those South Africans who were denying that inmates had been mistreated and rejoicing that Stuttaford was refusing to ban the book.[71] During the following week *Die Burger* printed several letters from angry Afrikaners who corroborated Raal's account. In Johannesburg, Verwoerd gave the matter a great deal of space in the columns of *Die Transvaler*. In one editorial, the imperious editor recalled Lamont's denigration of the Voortrekkers in *War, Wine and Women* and insisted that in their denials of concentration camp atrocities, Raal's foes were again distorting history.[72] Verwoerd rejoiced, however, that the public dispute over the book was spurring its sales.[73] Vividly illustrating his anger in a case of rhetorical overkill, during the remainder of August, he printed dozens of letters, most of them quite detailed, from readers who related wartime experiences similar to those about which Raal had written. One such reader was a woman who expressed her willingness to testify under oath that she had seen beef poisoned at the camp in which she had been an inmate.[74]

Conclusion

Having considered in detail various dimensions of the controversies surrounding the distribution and reception of Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* and Cloete's *Turning Wheels*, we can draw conclusions about what these disputes reveal about issues concerning Afrikaner nationalism and attitudes towards authorial licence during the 1930s.

It should be borne in mind that the two cases had obvious similarities and equally evident dissimilarities, stemming in part from the fact that the books in question were quite different but also from the outrageous attack on Lamont. Both authors challenged directly the emergent myth of the heroic Voortrekkers. Whether they intentionally sought to undermine the works of men like Preller is unclear and was probably of little consequence to many of their offended detractors, but in any case it seems highly plausible that both had heard much in the Transvaal about its early pioneers from the Cape and their descendants, and that both chose to write about them in a much different vein. They, especially Cloete, did so at a time when the myth was being greatly enhanced on the eve of the centenary of the Great Trek. This was also during a turbulent decade in South African politics when Afrikaner ethnic identity was deeply intertwined with the realignment of political parties, many Afrikaners were struggling to adjust to a rapidly changing, urbanising economy, and, as indicated in Chapter V, Afrikaans cultural organisations were flourishing as never before. The merger of the Hertzog faction of the National Party and Smuts's South African Party to form the United Party, which many Anglophone voters supported, left the National Party and newspapers which served as its mouthpieces to play key public rôles in defending what they regarded as Afrikaans interests, not infrequently defending them against what were perceived as attacks by Anglophone South Africans. The *ad hominem* attention paid to Cloete's Englishness must be seen in this light. No less significantly, both Lamont and Cloete approached historical Afrikanerdom as essentially outsiders, notwithstanding the quasi-Afrikaans branches on the paternal side of the latter's family tree. Finally, having written in what many Afrikaners resented as a derogatory vein, both men received widespread public support, chiefly but not exclusively from Anglophone quarters.

Turning to critical differences in the disputes, Lamont's ethnic identity never became a target of his critics, no doubt owing to the fact that few of them knew who "Wilfred Saint-Mandé" was until after his widely publicised tarring feathering in May 1932. The frequency with which Cloete's Afrikaans critics sought to undermine his credibility by calling attention to his British

roots and service in His Majesty's armed forces itself underscores the Anglophobic strain in Afrikaner nationalism at a time when memories of the Second Anglo-Boer War were presumably still vivid in the minds of many Afrikaners. In this regard it should also be borne in mind that by the latter half of the 1930s considerable numbers of Afrikaans-speaking "poor whites" had swelled the populations of South African cities, where Anglophone capitalists dominated economic life and clearly enjoyed a higher living standard than did most Afrikaners. One senses a keen element of Afrikaans ethnic resentment in the perceptions of some of those who lambasted *Turning Wheels* as the product of an Englishman's pen.

The geographical foci of the most intense reactions to the two books also differed. Hostility to *War, Wine and Women* naturally was centred in Pretoria, particularly when rumours surfaced that its author was a lecturer at that city's young university. Yet letters from irate readers to Afrikaans newspapers and contributions to defray the fines imposed on Lamont's assailants soon came from many other quarters, as well. Five years later, the movement to suppress *Turning Wheels* began in Cape Town and Stellenbosch but, like the Voortrekkers of old, soon spread to various towns in the Eastern Cape, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal. In terms of geographical extent, the reactions to both books soon involved large numbers of Afrikaners in most regions of the Union of South Africa. Lamont's physical presence in the country and Cloete's absence from it during the public disputes about their allegedly calumnious volumes obviously affected the ways in which these authors were treated but did not otherwise alter the forms which protests against them took. To be sure, many Afrikaners rushed to the defence of Lamont whereas very few stood by Cloete, but the disparity can be attributed to the fact that the anti-Voortrekker and anticlerical utterances in *War, Wine and Women* are those of an obviously embittered fictitious character, whereas Cloete's creation of various Voortrekkers who undermined the heroic image could not be attributed to anything resembling the narrative technique at issue in Lamont's diatribes.

Both cases testify to the persistence and, one is tempted to say, the vehemence of Afrikaner nationalism throughout the 1930s. The increasing frequency of commemorative events and publications leading up to the centenary of the Great Trek evidently nurtured a crescendo of ethnic fervour which allowed scant room for the challenges which Lamont's and Cloete's books posed. It is not necessary to venture out on the thin ice of retrospective group psychology by speculating about a collective inferiority complex on the part of Afrikaners, although as we have seen some irate defenders of authorial freedom did precisely that. What is evident is that both in 1932 and in 1937 numerous individual Afrikaners and their cultural organisations felt sufficiently

insulted to call for the banning of the books at issue, and in the Lamont case one finds extensive endorsement of illegal violence done to an author. Whether Cloete might have suffered similar or even more vicious abuse had he been in South Africa when *Turning Wheels* was published is a moot point which obviously defies an empirical answer.

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21. "Ceres Spreek Ook Afkeuring Uit", *Die Burger*, 7 December 1937, p. 7.

22. "Nasionaliste Laat Hul Stem Hoor", *Die Burger*, 7 December 1937, p. 7.

23. "Nog Kragtige Protes teen Turning Wheels", *Die Oosterlig* (Port Elizabeth), 10 December 1937, p. 3.

24. "Verontwaardiging op Pearston", *Die Oosterlig*, 3 December 1937, p. 3.

25. "Die Kerkraad van Jansenville", *Die Oosterlig*, 10 December 1937, p. 3.

26. "'Turning Wheels' Lok Protes Uit", *Die Transvaler* (Johannesburg), 29 November 1937, p. 4.

27. "Wat Gebeur As 'n Engelse Oud-Koning Belaster Word", *Die Burger*, 26 November 1937, p. 8.

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29. "Liederlike Geslagsroman", *Die Oosterlig*, 10 December 1937, p. 3.

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Chapter XI

Conclusion: *Quod Erat Demonstrandum*

This study has been an interdisciplinary journey into previously largely uncharted territories of South African literary history. The excursion began with a consideration of the genesis of the heroic myth in the 1830s of the people later known as the Voortrekkers and followed its amplification during times of intense Afrikaner nationalism, manifestations in imaginative literature written in Dutch, Afrikaans, and English from the 1880s until the 1930s. We considered the purposes of the myth in literature, such as its didactic use in presenting rôle models for young Afrikaners during years of rapid urbanisation and allegedly declining moral standards, and we examined how some of the authors writing in these three languages presented the Voortrekkers as imperfect but nevertheless heroic individuals. After surveying certain political and social developments in the Union of South Africa during the 1920s and 1930s and particularly the evolution of Afrikaans cultural organisations at that time, we considered how Lamont's *War, Wine and Women* and Cloete's *Turning Wheels* differed notably from antecedent fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek and how their depictions of the Voortrekkers aroused the ire of many Afrikaners. Within this part of the journey, we analysed the fundamental misunderstanding in South Africa of *War, Wine and Women*, which, as demonstrated earlier on, was not primarily a book about the Voortrekkers and their descendants, but belonged to the briefly popular "war book" sub-genre of British literature. It was also seen that Lamont's and Cloete's challenges to the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers reflected their authors' critical responses to certain contemporary issues in the Union of South Africa and that the rhetorically and physically violent reactions to their books were manifestations of a zealous dimension of Afrikaner nationalism, especially in some of the cultural organisations in question, and involved fundamental issues of censorship.

Along the way, we looked down paths which departed from the main road but which nevertheless related intimately to it on the complex terrain of international publishing and scholarship pertaining thereto, such as how the campaign of various Afrikaner nationalists to have the importation of *Turning Wheels* banned inspired representatives of other ethnic groups (especially Indians and English-speaking whites in the Union of South Africa) to call for the censorship of books in which their own groups were described in derogatory terms.

In the introductory chapter of the present study I promised to develop several interlocking themes, and in the intervening nine chapters I have adduced a great deal of literary and journalistic evidence as well as an appreciable amount of archival material in doing

so. The first of these was that "certain aspects of the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers antedate the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the late nineteenth century and that during the Victorian colonial period both Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans contributed notably to the shaping of that image of the emigrating Boers". It was pointed out in Chapter II that even before the end of the 1830s English-language journalistic opinion of the people who would later be called the Voortrekkers was divided, and that while some colonial observers, especially John Fairbairn in Cape Town, dismissed their emigrating neighbours as irresponsible and disloyal adventurers others, such as Robert Godlonton, acknowledged that the Boers had legitimate grievances against the administration of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope and could therefore respect and justify their decision to depart. Later, men like Henry Cloete took pains to explain to English-speaking audiences and readers that there were in fact copper-bottomed reasons for the Great Trek.

Secondly, it has been demonstrated in Chapter III that between the 1880s and the 1930s authors writing novels about the Great Trek for both adolescents and adults in Dutch and Afrikaans incorporated the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers in their accounts, in large measure for didactic purposes, but these novelists did not consistently laud the emigrating Boers as people to be emulated. Indeed, in the majority of the works considered the general portrayal is of a people who incorporated both praiseworthy and lamentable traits, with stubbornness and a penchant for engaging in *broedertwis* standing out as recurring themes in these characters. Nevertheless, the positively limned characteristics of the Afrikaners inevitably outweigh their negatively depicted traits. Moreover, in contrast to the other ethnic groups represented in the gallery of characters, especially the indigenous Africans, who are almost uniformly seen as violent and untrustworthy, but also most of the English in Southern Africa, the Voortrekkers in these fictional works generally stand out as brave, pious, and otherwise laudable individuals. The female characters are especially praiseworthy; indeed, some of them are exalted in nearly hagiographic terms.

Thirdly, to a great extent this qualified presentation of heroic Voortrekkers also characterises the two novels by Eugénie de Kalb and Francis Brett Young, namely *Far Enough* and *They Seek a Country*, respectively. Both authors, especially De Kalb, consciously took it upon themselves to portray the Voortrekkers in a positive light, although their reasons for doing so appear to have differed. De Kalb relied heavily on oral tradition, having interviewed large numbers of descendants of Voortrekkers, and that approach to the historical subject unquestionably shaped the collective traits of her characters. Despite her post-graduate

education in English literature at the University of Cambridge, this young American does not appear to have been beholden to anything British in the construction of her novel, nor does she appear to have developed a lasting attachment to the Union of South Africa. She did, however, take up the verbal cudgels in defence of the racial policies of its government during the mid-1930s, as we have seen in our consideration of her piece in *The New York Times*. By contrast, the Englishman Brett Young spent many years in South Africa, wrote several novels about the country's history, and repeatedly evinced a desire for greater harmony between the disputatious British and Afrikaans segments of its population during the politically tense years between the two world wars, a point to which we shall return shortly.

Fourthly, turning to the two principal and most controversial novels under consideration, it has been demonstrated that they differed from nearly all preceding fictional reconstructions of the Great Trek and the Voortrekkers in the extent to which they cast a critical light on that event and its participants. As demonstrated, mixed portrayals of the emigrating Boers were by no means a novelty in the 1930s. In Lamont's *War, Wine and Women*, however, the depiction of the Voortrekkers and their descendants is completely negative, while in Cloete's *Turning Wheels* the Voortrekker characters are decidedly less emulable than in the preceding works considered, with the obvious exception of *War, Wine and Women*. Furthermore, Cloete slaughtered two holy cows of Afrikanerdom by - like Lamont - broaching the matter of sexual relations between Afrikaners and African indigenes and by allegedly impugning the spiritual integrity of the Voortrekkers in describing how Hendrik van der Berg uses his self-styled Abrahamic identity to justify killing his son in the interests of sexual gratification. In these emotionally laden respects both authors went far beyond the limited criticism which other novelists of the Great Trek had levelled at such phenomena as the inability of many Voortrekkers to unite harmoniously behind their leaders or to adapt adequately to rapidly changing conditions.

A fifth theme highlighted in Chapter I was that the novels by both Lamont and Cloete were not merely retrospective reconstructions of nineteenth-century events but included commentaries on political and social phenomena in the Union of South Africa. This has been underscored in our consideration of the work of both men. Criticism of developments on the South African scene are undoubtedly most pronounced in his self-righteous *Halcyon Days in Africa*, in which Lamont not only excoriates what his autobiographical protagonist perceives as the boorishness of the Afrikaners but also took to task the racist policies of the Hertzog government, low academic standards at the University of Pretoria, political motivations

involved in professorial appointments at that institution, oppressive labour relations, and other matters of concern, some of which echo his contribution to public debates in Pretoria during his years as a lecturer there. To be sure, in *War, Wine and Women* Lamont's commentary about contemporary South Africa is relatively briefly embedded in and, as was argued at length in Chapter VI, subordinated to his criticism of British military strategy, inflated chauvinism and notions of national innocence, and the support of the Anglican clergy for the crusade against the "Huns" during the Great War. Nevertheless, in the most explicit of terms Lamont's remarks about the authoritarianism of the Dutch Reformed clergy, the racism of Afrikaners, their hypocrisy regarding their own supposed ethnic purity and participation in interracial sexual activities, and related matters squarely confronted the ethnic pride of the Afrikaner nationalism which drew heavily on the mythic image of the Voortrekkers and which Lamont thought was inimical to the weightier issues facing the Union of South Africa, especially as they involved race relations.

Much in Cloete's *Turning Wheels* can be read as both a historical reconstruction of the Great Trek and a foreboding of disaster if changes in race relations were not implemented, both in South Africa and, to a limited degree, Europe. As we have seen in Chapter IX, his description of the Canaan settlement which the Voortrekkers build up and their assumption that it is a bastion supposedly permanently secure from black incursions is an unmistakable model of white-dominated society in the Union of South Africa. Cloete's relatively brief treatment of its fall thus belongs just as much to the sub-genre of prophetic South African apocalyptic literature as it does to that of historical fiction. On both the international and domestic scenes, his description of the treatment of the Jewish pedlar Rosenstein, though by no means free of anti-Semitic elements, and particularly the tension between this itinerant merchant and the German immigrant von Rhule, dovetails neatly with the context of Verwoerdian anti-Semitism and the early stages of Nazi persecution of Jews in the Third Reich.

In some of the other novels in English about the Great Trek this element of contemporary commentary also comes to the fore. In *They Seek a Country*, for example, the Englishman Brett Young engages in unveiled pleading for greater harmony between the British settlers in Southern Africa and their Afrikaans neighbours with obvious implications for their descendants in the factious political environment of the Union of South Africa. The central characters, John Oakley and his wife Elisabeth, find harmony and marital bliss only when separated from both the colonial authorities in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope and her

Anglophobe relatives. The young couple envisage the time when their offspring will identify themselves not in terms of their ethnicity but merely as South Africans.

Sixthly, when one turns to the bitter controversies surrounding both *War, Wine and Women* and *Turning Wheels* and juxtaposes the diatribes against them with the literary merits and demerits of these fictional texts, it becomes evident that - notwithstanding occasional assertions to the contrary - most of the men and women who sought to ferret out the identity of Wilfred Saint-Mandé and ban both that work and *Turning Wheels* were little concerned about the artistic qualities of these texts. Instead, these Afrikaners were galvanized essentially by what they recognised as frontal attacks on the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers, with whom they themselves identified, in the factious political climate of the 1930s. To be sure, as we saw in Chapter X some of Cloete's detractors pointed to his unbalanced and truncated picture of the Great Trek as a historical phenomenon, while others highlighted his abysmal Afrikaans orthography as a weakness in the text. Yet the overriding concern of the Afrikaners who insisted that the further importation of *Turning Wheels* be stopped was the partially negative depiction of the Voortrekkers, and it was this which they cited as the grounds for their demand.

Finally, we have presented a great deal of journalistic and archival evidence to demonstrate circumstantially that at least part of the hostile Afrikaner response to Lamont's *War, Wine and Women*, including the physical assault on him, was orchestrated and that the interests of certain individuals in this campaign coincided with those of the *Afrikaner-Broederbond*. The correspondence between the rector of the University of Pretoria and the administrator of the Transvaal stands at the heart of this evidence, which also includes *inter alia* D.F. Malan's comments in Parliament, in which he was able to reply immediately to details of Lamont's professional life which he certainly could not have known had no investigation already taken place. There can be little question that at a time when Afrikaner nationalism was pitted against moderate liberalism various people in both the government of the Union of South Africa and the administration of the Transvaal co-ordinated their efforts to rid the University of Pretoria of a politically liberal man whose acidic pen they regarded not merely as a challenge to the heroic myth of the Voortrekkers but also as an affront to the dignity of their own ethnic group.

In all of these respects, the findings presented in dissertation extend the frontiers of knowledge in the areas of historical and literary scholarship.

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